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SHORT STORIES

No. 665.] For the Week Ending September 28th, 1901. [One Penny.

The Adventures of an Actress.

"Do ye mane to say," came the shrill retort, "that ye have not heard of Moll Malone, the Queen of the Beggars?"

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THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

VIII.—The Queen of the Beggars.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

It was a lovely autumn morning. Sackville Street, Dublin, the most beautiful thoroughfare of—as every patriotic Irishman avows—the most beautiful city in the world, was crowded with pedestrians of all sorts and conditions.

Among these were three persons, a man and two ladies, who attracted no small amount of attention from the other foot-passengers.

The reason for this was to be found in the fact that one of them was a woman pre-eminently beautiful, even in a city renowned for its types of feminine beauty as Dublin assuredly is.

Tall, graceful, with the complexion of a Hebe, it was small wonder that men and women turned to look admiringly at the wondrous charms of Hazel Harlow.

On either side of the young actress were her two friends and fellow-actors, Eric Monteith and Jenny Lovelace.

The *Good Samaritan* Company had duly arrived in Dublin and Belfast, and had already given their opening performance at the Queen's Theatre in Great Brunswick Street.

"What a beautiful city Dublin is," Hazel was saying. "I thought it always rained in Ireland, but to-day it is lovely, and the sky so blue it doesn't look as if it could ever rain again."

Eric laughed.

"I remember staying at a village called Malahide some years ago," he said, "and it rained twelve days out of sixteen. It was a pretty little place not far from here on the coast, and I had gone there for golf and boating. I think I had a good sample of Ireland's reputation for moisture."

They had just come opposite the Hotel Metropole. On the steps of the hotel portico two men were standing, the one a short, rather portly man, with a thick gold watch-chain and beringed fingers, who cast a leering glance at Hazel as she passed.

"That's the famous actress, Miss Harlow," he said in an audible aside to his companion, following up his remark by words too brutally coarse to be set down here in print.

The colour rushed to Hazel's face. She winced as though she had been struck. Eric heard the words too. A terrible expression came into his face. Without a moment's hesitation he wheeled round and walking up to the fellow said in tones that he endeavoured to keep calm:

"Apologise instantly for what you have said, you hound, or I'll thrash you here in the public street."

The man laughed.

"Who the dickens are you?" he said sneeringly, "I'll see myself in Jericho first. Actresses are public property——"

But he got no further. Monteith seized him by the collar and swung him on to the pavement with a grip of iron. The next moment he had raised a light cane he was carrying and began to belabour the ruffian's broad back with terrible blows. In vain the man writhed and struggled. He was in the grasp of a trained athlete.

At last he bellowed out in accents of mingled rage and pain. "I apologise! I apologise!"

Eric let go of the man's collar and the fellow staggered back. Then the young man turned and faced the crowd that had gathered round.

"That ruffian insulted this lady most grossly," he said, "I have given him the punishment he deserved."

"Bedad! and that's thrue," said a man who was standing near. "I heard what he said, the spalpeen got what he deserved, bad cess to him."

But "the spalpeen," had slunk off into the hotel like a dog into his kennel. The crowd slowly dispersed and Eric hurried his two fair companions away from the scene of the unpleasant episode.

Inside the vestibule of the Metropole—an observer of what had taken place outside—was a tall dark man of a somewhat saturnine cast of countenance. As the fellow who had felt the strength of Eric's hand sought the shelter of the hotel the stranger approached him.

"I should like a word with you," he said in a low voice.

The other rapped out an oath. "But I don't want one with you," he snarled, his pent up rage and mortification finding vent at the first opportunity.

But the other was not to be put off so easily. "Come to my room and have a bottle of champagne," he said easily, "I assure you it will be to your advantage." So saying he took the man by the arm and led him to the elevator. "Second floor," he said to the lift-boy. In a minute or so the two men were alone in a comfortable private sitting room.

"Allow me," said the stranger, "to give you my card." He handed a slip of pasteboard to his still surly

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comrade upon which was written, "Mr. Horace Caldecott."

"Good morning, Mr. Caldecott" he said gruffly. "Joshua Randell is my name, of Mark Lane, City. Perhaps you'll be so good as to tell me why you dragged me up here."

"Certainly," answered the other with a smile, "Because we are both in the same boat."

"Both in the same boat? What do you mean?"

"Why that we both of us have a pretty good-sized grudge against Mr. Eric Monteith, the gentleman who objected to your saying what you did about Miss Hazel Harlow."

Randell broke out into a torrent of abuse. His back was still smarting sorely from the effect of his chastisement.

"I'll get even with the young blackguard somehow," he said vindictively.

"Yes, but how?" put in the other. "It strikes me from what I have just seen Mr. Monteith is perfectly well able to look after himself."

Randell took a long draught at the champagne glass that had been set before him, then he sat down somewhat heavily and looked long and earnestly into Caldecott's face.

"See, here," he said, "if you've got an idea, out with it. I'm your man through thick and thin."

Caldecott hesitated for a moment.

"Well," he said suddenly, "there's one way by which you can get at Mr. Monteith, and that's through Hazel Harlow. He's dead gone on her"—a look of horrid vindictiveness came into the speaker's face—"and he'd do anything to look after her interests. Once get Hazel Harlow into your power, and you can use her as the candle-flame that lures the moth Monteith to his undoing."

"Yes, that's all very well," broke in the other, "but we're in the twentieth century, now, and you can't go about kidnapping young girls as you used to in the old days. How do you propose to get hold of Miss Harlow?"

"Well, I know Dublin pretty well," answered the other, "and there are some places at the back of the Rotunda where men and women live who would do anything; aye, even to murder, for a few shillings. Now, I'll be frank with you. I want Miss Harlow for my own. I also owe Mr. Eric Monteith a grudge, which is no less insistent than your own, though he never tried to horsewhip me in the public streets, and if I work ou the details, will you stand by me when it comes to business?"

"There's my hand on it," answered Randell.

"Then let's get to business," said Caldecott, "there is a lot to be done."

CHAPTER II.

Hazel and Jenny had taken quiet apartments in Wicklow Street. They had just finished their lunch on the same day that had seen the discomfiture of Mr. Joshua Randell.

"Isn't it horrible," Hazel was saying, "that the fact of a girl electing to take up the theatrical profession should lay her open to be a fair target for anyone to throw mud at?" She shuddered as the reminiscence of that scene opposite the Hotel Metropole came across her brain.

"You are quite right, dear," answered Jenny in a low voice, "and yet, Hazel, it is a sad fact that so many of the female members of our profession are much too lax in their behaviour in private life. In one travelling company that I was in, one day in Bournemouth, the company hired a waggonette and drove through the streets of the town, each one armed with a penny tin trumpet or some child's musical instrument, which they blew vigorously all the way. The ladies, too, had pea-shooters with which they peppered the passers-by. Small wonder that actresses in travelling companies lay themselves open to such insults as you received this morning."

Hazel sighed. "How women can unsex themselves so," she said, "is past all human comprehension." Then she rose. "I think you said you had a letter to write, Jenny. That being the case, I'll just go out and buy some hairpins. I shan't be long, and then we'll go out and get some tea later on at that nice confectioner's in Sackville Street."

Hazel left the house and walked quickly down Wicklow Street into Grafton Street. Where the two streets met, a miserable woman was standing on the kerb upon whose face was a look of such unutterable misery that the actress paused involuntarily, her gentle heart touched by the sight of so much wretchedness.

"Give me a copper or so, miss," whined the woman, "I've three starving little ones at home crying out for bread."

Hazel paused. The story was a hackneyed one, yet she had not in her hitherto quiet life come into contact with all the misery and vice that flaunts itself in the streets of our great cities. The picture of the little starving children crying feebly for food in some miserable garret rose up before her eyes. Supposing if the woman's tale were true, surely the least that she could do would be to try and alleviate in some small way the sufferings of those who are unable to fight for themselves.

"If your story is true," she said, "I will willingly help you, but how am I to know that such is the case?"

"By coming with me to see for yourself," broke in the woman, eagerly. "Then you'll know that what I tell you is true."

Hazel hesitated. "Is it far from here?" she asked.

"Ten minutes' walk," answered the other.

"Then I'll come," said Hazel. Without another word the woman turned and shuffled off with the beautiful young actress at her side. The strangely assorted couple kept on until at last the beggar woman entered a narrow street the houses in which were of the poorest. She suddenly turned down a court of still meaner aspect. The woman paused before a door. Taking a rusty key from the pocket of her dress she inserted it in the lock. The door opened into an evil smelling passage way from which a flight of dirty wooden stairs led away to the upper part of the tenement. But the woman did not mount the stairs; she shuffled on down the passage way that led to the back regions of the house.

"In here, miss," she said in a low voice, throwing open a door.

Hazel entered to find herself in a long low room in which an old woman was seated. The sound of the door swinging back behind her caused her to wheel round in some surprise. From the far corner of the room another figure suddenly emerged, that of a squat,

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repulsive-looking man, but of children there was no sign.

"What is the meaning of this?" cried Hazel, turning round upon the woman who had brought her to this foul den. "Why have you brought me here?"

"To see Moll Malone," came the unexpected answer from an old hag whom Hazel had noticed on first entering the room.

A more repulsive-looking personage than this woman it would have been almost impossible to conceive. She must at one time have been tall, but age had bowed her figure. The skin of her face was yellow as parchment and seamed with innumerable wrinkles. Two beady black eyes of amazing brilliancy for one of her age peered forth from sunken eye-sockets. Her head was covered with short grey hair which protruded elfishly from a mobcap that had once been white. Her arms were long and skinny; her hands were veritable claws.

Hazel gazed at this repulsive apparition with horror.

"Who are you?" she said, "what do you want with me?"

"Do ye mane to say," came the shrill retort, "that ye have not heard of Moll Malone the Queen of the Beggars? Shure and yours is the purtiest face that's been inside Moll's house this many a long day."

"But what do you want with me?" cried Hazel again.

"What is it I'm wanting, darlin'," came the answer, "why that's soon told. Money is what I'm wanting and money I must have before you lave this house."

"Then the story that I heard about three little starving children is all a lie," cried Hazel hotly. "I've been trapped here to be blackmailed."

"Trapped," answered the hag, "did ye not come of yer own accord? Now don't be unreasonable. It's only a little money that Moll's asking of ye, just that and ye shall go free."

Hazel saw resistance would be useless. A wild desire came over her to escape from her loathsome surroundings at all hazards.

"How much do you want?" she asked.

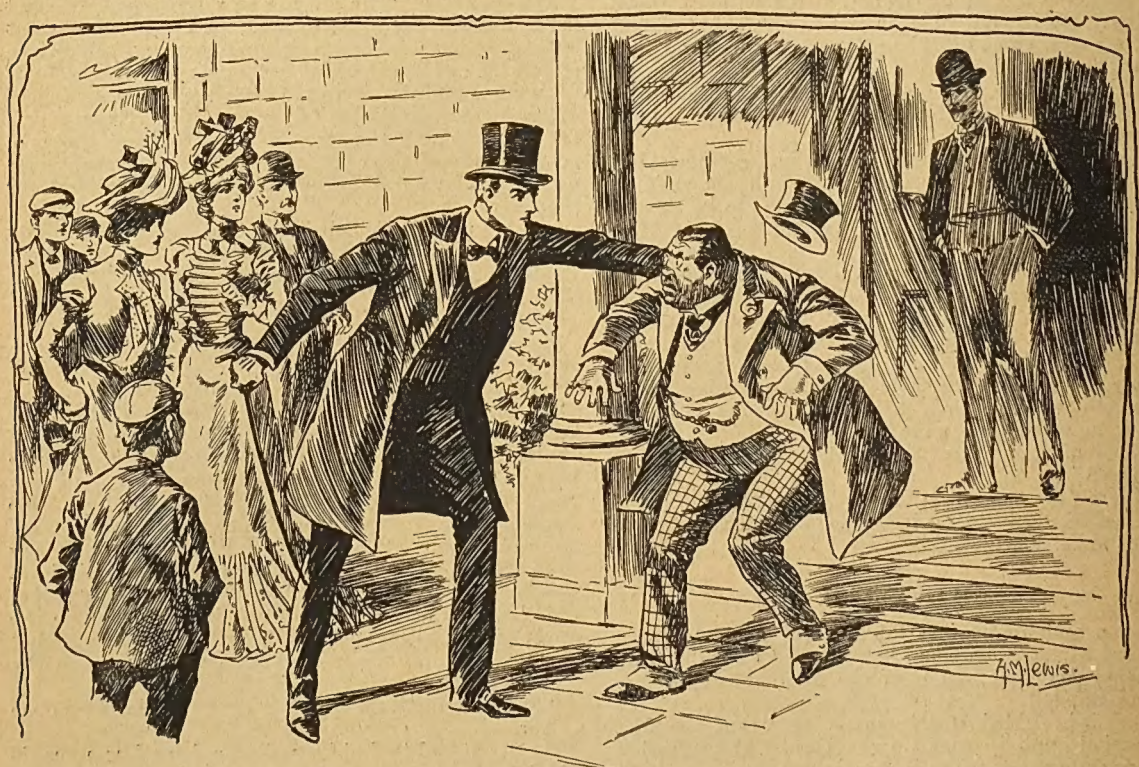
"All that ye have," was the answer.

"That is not very much," said Hazel, stoutly. "Only a little silver in my purse, and no jewellery," as you can see for yourself. You have lured a very poor prize into your trap."

"May be," said the hag, coolly; "but if ye haven't money about ye, there'll be those ready to pay for your ransom."

"Yes, and the moment you communicate with my friends, they'll take steps to have you punished for your wickedness."

"Is it a foole you'll be taken be for entirely," croaked Moll, a horrid smile coming into her withered countenance. "Do you think that Moll Malone has not more ways than one of gaining her ends? No, no, acushla, it is here you'll stay until you'll give me your



Monteith seized him by the collar, and swung him on to the pavement with a grip of iron.

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sacred word that if ye go free there's no word said of how Moll gave ye lodging."

"And if I refuse?" cried Hazel, with eyes ablaze.

"Ye'll not do that, mavourneen," answered the hag impassively.

Hazel cast a swift glance around her. Was there no means of escaping from her odious surroundings? Moll noted her action.

"It's not escaping ye'd be after trying?" she said, mockingly. "Ye're with Moll Malone, and Moll knows her business."

"How much ransom money do you want?" repeated Hazel, realising the futility of resistance.

At that moment there came a peculiar knock at the door by means of which Hazel had just entered. In a moment the expression on Moll's face changed. She made a sign to the man behind Hazel. Like a panther he sprang forward and flung open a door that led out of the apartment into what was apparently another room beyond.

"Step in here for a minute, miss," he said hoarsely. "No harm shall happen to ye—I swear it—if ye do as yer told. It'll only be for a few minutes. Mother Moll has visitors—visitors that ye mightn't like to see."

The last few words were uttered in a voice fraught with terrible significance, the meaning of which Hazel was at a loss to understand. Her blood ran cold. Into what haunt of devilry had she been enticed?

She hesitated. Should she scream aloud for help? The man beside her seemed to divine her intention instantaneously.

"If ye cry out," he said, "nothing can save ye. Quick! It's yer last chance!"

A thunderous knock came at the door. Hazel, at her wits' end to know what course to pursue, darted inside the room indicated by her captor. She found herself in a small chamber, little better than a cupboard, lit by a skylight from the roof. The door was shut behind her, and she heard a bolt shoot back into its socket.

Moll Malone threw open the door upon which the knocking had been so insistent, to admit two men, who were so closely muffled up that their features were unrecognisable.

"Hullo, Moll," said one of them. "So here you are just the same as ever. Why the dickens didn't you open when I knocked first?"

"The Squire," muttered Moll. "What may you be after wanting?"

Caldecott, for he it was, laughed.

"I'm not the first man," he said, "who's come to Dublin to get Mother Malone's help. I want a piece of business done, I and this gentleman here," indicating Randell, his companion, "and we don't want——"

"To dirty yer own hands," broke in Moll.

"Quite so," answered Caldecott. "As we understand one another so well there will not be the slightest reason to beat longer about the bush. You must know then," he continued, "that the *Good Samaritan* Travelling Company has come to Dublin. Among them are two people in whom this gentleman and myself are interested. The one is a man, named Mr. Eric Monteith, the other a lady, known as Miss Hazel Harlow. Now this gentleman here is willing to pay you the sum of one hundred pounds should Mr. Eric Monteith be so injured as to make his departure from Dublin exceedingly unlikely at least for a time. Now don't misunderstand me. We don't want him murdered. We merely want him to have good reason to remember his visit to Dublin. Both this gentleman and myself have a private grudge against him, and should like to interview him for ourselves. As for this Miss Harlow, I want to devise some scheme whereby I can have her for my own."

Caldecott spoke in a tone of quiet villainy with as much nonchalance as though he had been carying on an everyday conversation instead of planning the downfall of two people whose only crime had been their individual integrity.

The hag heard him without a sound. When he had finished she said: "And this Miss Harlow, what's she like?"

"The most beautiful woman that ever lived," cried Caldecott.

The hag gave vent to a hoarse chuckle. "So that's how the wind blows," she said, "is it?"

"Yes," broke in Caldecott angrily, "but that's neither here nor there; the question is, how are we going to waylay Mr. Eric Monteith?"

"Oh, that's easy enough," came the answer. "I'll guarantee to get him here to-night if you like. As for the girl, well, that's not such an easy matter."

"Not even if it's a question of money," said Caldecott eagerly. "Surely the Queen of the Beggars is never at a loss to know what to do when she's well paid."

"But you pay my price," said the hag, "and what's more, you pay it without fuss. Ye know me by this time, Squire. You know that Moll means what she says, and if I'm going to do anything for you there must be no half measures. Five hundred pounds is my price for Hazel Harlow."

"Done," cried Caldecott.

"And you'll swear to me to pay the five hundred pounds within a week after the day on which I deliver up Hazel Harlow to you?"

"Yes, yes," cried Caldecott hoarsely.

"What do ye intend doin' to the girl?" croaked the old woman after a moment's pause.

Caldecott uttered a mirthless laugh. "What business is that of yours, Moll?" he asked.

"I always like to know my client's business," answered the harridan.

"Then if you must know, I am going to make her my wife."

Moll made no comment to this statement. Her lips tightened for a moment. Then she went on: "And the hundred pounds for the other job?" she croaked.

"That's my affair," broke in Randell. "Money ain't tight with me, and you'll find the hundred quid easily earned, I should say."

Moll turned once more to Caldecott. "Your word on that, squire?" she said.

Caldecott nodded. "But how are you going to get Miss Harlow for me?" he said in a low voice.

The hag rose to her feet and went to the door into which Hazel had been shown some fifteen minutes before. She turned back the rusty bolt, and threw open the portal.

"Here's Miss Harlow for ye" she cried.

With a cry Caldecott sprang forward and bounded into the room. His eyes sought every corner of the chamber and then went back to the ghastly face of the old hag beside him.

"What do you mean, woman?" he roared. "This is no time for jesting."

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For the room was empty. Of Hazel Harlow there was not the vestige of a sign.

The situation was eminently dramatic. At the open door that communicated with the inner chamber stood the hag Moll Malone; in the centre of the inner room itself stood Caldecott, livid with baffled fury; behind the old woman were grouped the beggar woman who had lured Hazel to this den of infamy, Joshua Randell and the man who seemed to be the old woman's tool. For a moment or so Moll stood motionless peering into the innermost recesses of the little chamber, with eyes full of fear, then she crossed herself in superstitious awe.

"Holy Mother!" she ejaculated, "the spirits must have taken the sweet colleen away, she was too beautiful for the Powers not have guarded their own."

Then she wheeled round and called out in a piercing voice; "Kathleen! Terence! Is it not with your own eyes that ye saw the lady walk in here?" And in fear-stricken voices the man and woman answered in the affirmative with one accord.

Horace Caldecott was a man in whose composition there was not a grain of superstition; "Have I lost my senses?" he muttered, "Or is everyone conspiring to send me out of my mind? Enough of this mystery, woman," he went on roughly, "for goodness sake explain what you mean. Am I to understand that you locked up Miss Hazel Harlow in this very room scarce half an hour ago?"

"If so be that Hazel Harlow is the most beautiful colleen that ever Moll Malone cast eyes on, then it's truth you're speaking. It was in that very room and there's ne'er a trap-door nor hiding place in it as you can see for yourself. As for the skylight above ye can see for yourselves that she could not have reached that. Ye can make what ye like out of what I've told ye."

"The woman's mad," broke in Randell coarsely. "They are all mad here in this God-forsaken country. And how does this get me any nearer my paying off old scores against this Monteith? I thought that was the business we had come here about."

"Mad, am I?" almost screamed Moll. "Then ye go elsewhere than to a madwoman to get yer dirty jobs done. I'll not move hand or foot for ye, ye omadhaun; not if ye were to pay me all the money there is in that cursed country of yours called England." And the hag spat upon the floor to emphasise her virulence.

"You see what your interference has done," said Caldecott, turning savagely to his confederate. "You've upset the whole apple-cart now, and we are both of us further than ever from getting what we want."

"It's the truth yer speaking," went on the incensed beldame. "I'll do no more for ye. Go and find Hazel Harlow for yerselves. Begone! Leave my house or I'll call the bhoys about yer ears! Molly Malone is in her own kingdom here. She's only to say the word and ther's hundreds who would be ready to prove whether they think her a madwoman or no!"

Caldecott saw that the hag was in earnest. He had during his career (one, it may be noted, that had led him into the innumerable byepaths of crime and vice) had great opportunity of rubbing shoulders with all the scum and riff-raff of most of the great cities of Europe, and he knew that Moll Malone, the queen of the Dublin beggars, did not speak idly. He knew what Randell's impatient pig-headedness had done for them, and the achievement of their ends by the means that he had anticipated.

"We'd better clear out of this," he muttered to his comrade, "before the place gets too hot to hold us."

Turning to the beldame, he pressed a sovereign into her hand.

"There Moll," he began, conciliatingly, but he got no further. The old woman, all her hot Irish blood seething with rage, flung the coin in his face.

"I'll have no money of yours," she screamed. "Get ye gone!"

An oath fell from Caldecott's lips. The coin had struck him on the forehead and had broken the skin. Randell seized him by the arm. "For Heaven's sake let's get out," he said in an access of terror. And thus the two men were forced to sink ingloriously away from the place from which Caldecott had hoped so much, and instead of being nearer to the achievement of their fell ends, they now seemed farther away than ever, for Caldecott felt in his heart that in some mysterious way Hazel had indeed been lured to Moll Malone's—for what object he was, of course, ignorant—and that she had somehow, equally mysteriously, disappeared. Perhaps the beggar queen knew more than she would ever say. Whatever the mystery was it would seem that Caldecott was to have no hand in the elucidation of it, yet the mad passion that he had conceived for Hazel Harlow that had been his spur in so many desperate ventures still served as a goad to urge him on. He was ready to sacrifice everything to become possessed of the woman for whom he felt so unholy a love.

But Caldecott and Randell were not to be allowed to escape scot-free from Moll's "bhoys." The old woman was roused to a tempest of fury by Randell's ill-timed remark. On the departure of the two confederates, she made a sign to her myrmidon, the man who had ushered Hazel into the adjoining chamber.

The fellow rushed to the door and gave vent to a piercing whistle, emitted four times. The cry was answered at once.

As Randell and Caldecott emerged from Moll's house into the squalid court into which it opened, four or five ruffians sprang upon them. They were knocked senseless, and borne away to be despoiled.

A week later, two wretched men, kept in durance vile by the orders of the despotic Queen of the Slums, whose sway was paramount in those regions, crept out into the streets of Dublin, to find what consolation they could in the resumption of their lives amongst their fellow men—sore, weak from their confinement, robbed of every penny they had had in their pockets, despoiled of every article of jewellery and value upon their persons.

As for Caldecott, he slunk away to his steam yacht, the *Mermaid*, lying in Dublin harbour, and gave orders to his amazed crew to leave the, for him, inhospitable city.

CHAPTER III.

Eric Monteith and Raymond Venables, the manager of the *Good Samaritan* Company, were strolling side by side down Sackville Street. The two men, although they had but little in common, had nevertheless become more or less intimate friends as they had learnt to know one another better, and besides they had one bond in common that had gone a great way to counteract the discrepancy in their respective natures, each of them was genuinely

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and sincerely in love with Hazel Harlow. As was natural, perhaps, under the circumstances both men were at that moment—it was early in the afternoon—talking about Hazel herself.

"It seems to me, Monteith," Venables was saying, "as though there was some terrible conspiracy afoot to ruin Miss Harlow's chances both off the stage and on. It seems incredible that a girl so beautiful, so noble-minded, so spotless, should have any enemies. And yet it must be so. At every town we have been to, Newcastle, Scarborough, Rugby, Sheffield, to say nothing of the episode on the Belfast boat, Miss Harlow's life has been in danger. Now she has not taken me into her confidence. I was foolish enough to try and flirt with her until I knew her better, but can't you put me in possession of the facts of the whole business?"

Eric hesitated. Although his friendship for Venables had passed the point of any restraint in conversation he nevertheless felt somewhat chary in divulging the whole story of how Hazel's life had come to be overshadowed by so much tribulation.

"Look here, Venables," he said at last, "I'd much rather you got Miss Harlow to tell you the whole story herself. You know perfectly well what my feelings for her are; that I'd marry her to-morrow and take her away from the stage at once if she'd have me. We're both in the same boat there."

"Except that I wouldn't take her off the stage," broke in Venables with an attempt at levity, "I'd make her and my fortune first. But that's away from the point. It's a fair field and no favour for us both, old man, and perhaps you are right in not betraying confidences. I'll ask Miss Harlow to make me her confidant if she thinks I'm worthy of it. It's a funny thing," he went on somewhat irrelevantly, "but I seem to be quite a changed man ever since I fell in love with Miss Harlow. The other ladies in the crowd seem so frightfully vulgar beside her. I don't seem to care a bit for the larks I used to have, for you know my boy how powerful the manager of a Company can be and how willing most of the ladies are to sacrifice a good deal to get into his good books. I could tell you tales that would set your respectable British hair on end like a porcupine's bristles."

"Spare me, my dear lady-killer," broke in the other with a laugh, "but, joking apart, to return to our subject. I wish I could get Miss Harlow to leave the stage. At every new town where we arrive I experience a sinking feeling at the heart that some terrible and unexpected accident is going to happen to our Star, and yet you can't be always watching her. With all her nobility of character she's as headstrong as a child over some things. Hullo! Isn't that the fair Jenny Lovelace?"

Eric sprang forward. "Hazel!" he cried, "Hazel!"

Jenny Lovelace it was, and on her face was a look of trouble. Eric was quick to notice the expression.

"What's up?" he asked quickly. "Hazel——"

"Is gone—disappeared," broke in Jenny. "I had some letters to write, and she went out to buy some hairpins. I waited half an hour, and as there was no sign of her I went to look for her. I went to the shop

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in Grafton Street where I knew she would get them, and they said that nobody had been in there to buy hairpins at all that afternoon. I hurried back to our lodgings thinking that I should perhaps find her there, but she had not returned. I went out again an hour or so after Hazel had gone, and at the corner of Wicklow Street I met a ragged boy, who asked me if I was looking for a tall, beautiful lady. I said yes, and he said he had seen her go off with a poor-looking woman some time back. He knew who she was, because it appears she had given him a bunch of flowers she had been wearing at the stage-door of the theatre last night. There's all I know."

The two men heard her out in breathless interest.

"Now what on earth," said Eric, "can have possessed Hazel to make her go off with a poor woman in Dublin? What on earth can be the meaning of it?"

Jenny shook her head.

"I don't know, I don't know," she said with tears in her eyes, "but what's to be done? Supposing——" she broke off and looked up piteously, almost fearfully, in Monteith's face. He read what it was she would have said. Supposing Hazel had fallen into the hands of the villain Caldecott again. Eric ground his teeth together in impotent fury.

"Where's the boy?" he said, "who told you that story?"

"He only told me and ran away after he had finished his speech," said Jenny despondently. "I don't believe I should even know him if I saw him again. He was an ordinary street urchin, rather taller than the average, and seemed pretty thick-set."

"Let us go back to the lodgings," said Eric, "perhaps Hazel has turned up after all. She may have gone off on some errand of mercy. The woman who called her away may have asked her help, and Hazel, who is always too ready to give an attentive ear to anyone who may seem to be in want, may have complied with her request. Perhaps we are making a mountain out of a mole-hill."

But in Wicklow Street there was no sign of the missing girl. It was now nearly five o'clock, and three hours had gone by since Hazel had disappeared.

"And we were going to have tea together in Sackville Street," said Jenny.

"We had better communicate with the police," cried Venables. "Things are getting serious."

"What good will that do?" asked Eric. "They've got no more to go upon than we have. If only we could find that urchin. He didn't say in which direction she went off with the woman, Miss Lovelace, did he?"

"He only said what I have told you," replied the girl.

The case was beginning to look hopeless. The three were at their wits' ends to know what to do. It really seemed as if Venables' suggestion was the only feasible one, to put the matter in the hands of the police. Accordingly a move was made towards the Police Head Quarters. The Superintendent of Police was put into full possession of the facts as far as they were known, which were meagre enough in all conscience. He could promise but little help as yet. There were hundreds of street-arabs in Dublin that might have answered to the description given by Jenny of the *gamin* who had supplied her with the information concerning Hazel's disappearance with the unknown woman.

"Unfortunately," he went on, "we have a great many slums in Dublin and there are not lacking people, as is the case in every great city, who are on the look-out for young and beautiful women for purposes of blackmail and extortion. All I can do is to supply a detective with all the details that we know and to get him to work through the low quarters of the city to see if anything has been heard of the young lady. You may be quite sure that if any police officers hear anything about the missing young lady, they will at once communicate with head-quarters. I shall at once communicate with you at the theatre."

The time passed slowly away. Six o'clock came and went, and the time for the performance of *The Good Samaritan* drew ever nearer and nearer. Of Hazel there was still no sign. Venables was at his wits' ends. In the first place, every seat in the theatre was sold in anticipation of seeing the famous Miss Harlow appear in the chief part of the play; secondly, the sickening fear that something terrible had happened to Hazel awoke terrible forebodings in the manager's mind. As for Eric, his feelings can be well imagined. Yet all his efforts had proved unavailing. He could find no trace of Hazel. It seemed as though the earth must have opened and swallowed up the beautiful young actress, together with the woman who had lured her away. It wanted half an hour before the commencement of the play. Eric was standing moodily at the stage-door of the theatre, a prey to the most horrible misgivings.

"I'd give a hundred pounds," he muttered, half aloud, "to anyone who would take me to Hazel Harlow."

A hand touched him on the arm. He turned sharply round, to be confronted with the tattered figure of a Dublin street arab. "Did ye say a hundred pounds, yer honour," the lad said.

"What do you mean?" Eric's hand gripped hold of the lad's arm like a vice. "Did you hear what I said."

"Faix, yer honour," answered the urchin with cool impudence, "I heard ye say that ye'ed be willing to give a hundred pounds to anyone who would take ye to Hazel Harlow, and it's meself would like to have the earning of such a swate little sum."

"Look here, boy," went on Monteith in a terrible voice. "If you're joking I'll wring the life out of you. If you're speaking the truth and can lead me to Hazel Harlow at this moment I'll give you one hundred pounds any time you like."

The boy's eyes glistened.

"A hundred pounds," he echoed faintly, "Mother of Moses, then I could go to Ameriky and join Mike. I'll do it." Then he went on in a low voice. "It's a dirty place I'll be after taking ye to, sir. Ye cannot come as ye are. There's niver a fine gentlman been where I'm going to take you. Have ye got any ould clothes?"

Hope renewed sprang up in Eric's breast. There was of course the chance that he was being made the victim of a hoax; on the other hand the lad might be speaking the truth.

"Wait here for me five minutes," he said, and turning, he dashed inside the theatre bellowing for the property man.

In a wonderfully short space of time he had found a new make-up. He had discarded his elegant Bond Street apparel for the dress of a fifth-rate Irish bobo. Coming down the stairs that led to the stage-door from the dressing-rooms he ran full tilt into Venables.

"Delay the piece as long as you can," he cried to the astonished manager. "Try the audience with a curtain-raiser. I've news of Hazel. I'm off on what may be a

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wild goose chase, or even worse. And even if I do find her she probably won't be able to act to-night. But anyhow we shall have something to show the audience and we can get through the piece with Cora Bond, her understudy."

Without more ado, before almost Venables could recover from the surprise occasioned by this tatter-madalion presentment of Eric Monteith the immaculate, the pseudo tramp had dashed out into the street. The arab was waiting for him.

"Be jabbers!" was the urchin's remark, "it's changed ye are entirely. I think even Mother Malone will be afther believing ye to be one of her bhoys. And about that hundred pounds, yer honour," he went on, "how am I to know I shall get that, supposing I take ye to find Miss Harlow?"

"Find Miss Harlow," answered Eric impressively, "and I swear by the Holy Saints above that you shall have the money."

"I believe ye, sir," said the urchin soberly, and together the strangely-assorted couple set off along the now darkened thoroughfares.

Eric did not know Dublin. He trusted himself implicitly to his youthful guide who led him through a maze of narrow slums and reeking alleys and noisome courts, where men and women reeled past in drunken frenzy. Eric shuddered to think that it was in haunts like this Hazel Harlow had been incarcerated.

Suddenly the boy drew near to his companion's side. "Say nothing," he muttered, "and follow me." And he suddenly dived down through a narrow pathway that led into the blackness beyond.

Monteith kept close behind his guide. The next moment he heard the sound as of a key being thrust into a door-lock. Together the two entered what Eric felt must be a deserted tenement house. He blundered on behind the boy up a flight of rickety wooden stairs. At the top the lad paused.

"Have ye a match?" he whispered.

Monteith produced a lucifer, and, from some recess in his tattered garments, the other drew a small piece of tallow candle. This he lit, and Monteith found that they were standing on a narrow landing, facing yet another door, that was apparently locked. Again the lad produced a key. He shot back the bolts, and ushered the other inside a squalid apartment, in one corner of which was a huddled-up figure. Eric sprang forward.

"Hazel!" he cried; "Hazel!"

The girl—for she it really was—sprang from her crouching position with a cry of almost apprehensive joy.

"Eric, is it you? Thank God!"

But the youth interposed. "There's no time to lose," he said. "We've got to look out for Mother Malone's spies, but the lady can't go out as she is in those clothes," for Hazel still wore the stylish walking dress that she had had on when leaving Wicklow Street.

"What's to be done?" said Eric in despair.

The boy laid a finger upon the side of his nose in a knowing manner. Then he went to a corner of the room and pulled up a plank which was evidently the lid of some recess in the boarding. Thrusting his hand into the black void he pulled forth a bundle consisting of a coarse piece of sacking knotted at the top. With quick fingers he untied the knot and disclosed a heterogenous mass of clothes among which could be seen one or two pairs of boots, some faded silks and satins and a lot of worthless pieces of garments.

"This is my collection," he said with a grin. "We'll find ye something here to cover yer dress."

The clothes were indescribably dirty and had evidently been stolen by the lad at various times. But with so much at stake Hazel did not hesitate. She discarded her fashionable hat and covered her glorious red-gold hair with a poke bonnet that must have done service for some old Irish beggar woman. Over her dress-skirt she slipped a dirty faded red petticoat, disguising her bodice with an old cloak.

"And will ye make yer face dirty?" said the boy.

This was easily done; there was no lack of dust and filth in the squalid chamber. The final touches having been given to this somewhat unusual toilette the lad surveyed Hazel approvingly.

"Faix, and I'm sure Mother Malone won't know yer again," he muttered exultingly, "and now follow close behind me and we'll have ye out of this before ye know ye've been here, and if it's drunk ye can both of ye pretend to be so much the better. It's a way wid the gintry here and it'll not make ye so conspicuous as if ye were sober entirely."

To an actor and actress, for Eric could now fairly lay claim to be called such, while Hazel had indisputably proved her right to stand among the ranks of the ladies of her profession, such an injunction was sure to be obeyed. Moreover the knowledge of all there was at stake acted as a goad both to Monteith and to Hazel notwithstanding all that the latter had but recently gone through. And so the oddly assorted trio started on their journey towards Brunswick Street.

CHAPTER IV.

It can be well imagined that Raymond Venables' state of mind after the apparition of Eric Monteith as a seedy tramp was more chaotic than it had been before. And now, not only had he lost his leading lady but another member of his company had dashed off upon an unknown quest leaving him with the onus of providing a curtain-raiser to keep his audience quiet, under the faint hope that perhaps Miss Harlow might be restored within an hour. In despair, Venables sought out Jenny Lovelace and asked her advice.

Jenny's sunny nature was at once imbued with the re-accession of hope.

"Mr. Monteith is not the sort of man to go off like that unless he had some reason for it," she said, "you must do exactly what he told you."

Venables looked at his watch.

"The curtain should be up in a quarter of an hour," he said, "and I can make the orchestra give an extra turn. That'll be a saving of five or six minutes; then I'll go on and make a little speech and explain that an accident has happened to Miss Harlow, but that I hope she will be well enough to get through her part later on. Then you and I can give them Theyre Smith's *A Pair of Lunatics*, and then—well, if Monteith and Miss Harlow don't turn up by that time the fat will be in the fire. You know what a Dublin audience is? They'll think we're having them, and as likely as not there'll be a rumpus."

The orchestra gave the extra turn as decided, and a selection of Irish airs wound the audience up to a fine pitch of enthusiasm. As the last notes of "The Wearing of the Green" died away, Raymond Venables stepped out before the curtain. His face was rather pale, yet he spoke with perfect distinctness and decision.

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"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have to convey to you a piece of news that will, I know, cause you profound and heartfelt sorrow. Miss Hazel Harlow, who is cast for the part of Ruth in The *Good Samaritan*, is unfortunately rather seriously indisposed, but with wonderful fortitude she has consented to try and appear a little later on in the evening. As I know that you are all desirous of seeing an actress who, although young to the stage, has won a prominent place for herself in her profession, I have decided to present to you a small curtain-raiser as a commencement of our bill-of-fare. The piece we have chosen is called *A Pair of Lunatics* and will be, I hope, adequately presented by Miss Jenny Lovelace and myself."

The speech was received with good humour and much applause.

"The audience is in a good temper now," muttered Venables, as he retired to his dressing-room, "I only hope to goodness Monteith and Miss Harlow will turn up in time."

A Pair of Lunatics was received with acclamation. The curtain was rung down and Venables rushed off the stage into the wing to find that a sudden commotion had sprung up occasioned by the arrival of three disreputable beings whom my readers will not have much difficulty in recognising as Hazel, Eric, and the larrikin.

When it became known among the members of the Company that the dramatic entry had been effected by Eric and Hazel their surprise can be better imagined than described. As for Venables he was jubilant, and not without cause, for by a miracle his beautiful lead had been restored to him safe and sound and, notwithstanding the fact of all she had gone through, expressed her firm determination to sustain her *rôle* as soon as she could remove the traces of her recent adventure.

With jubilation apparent on every line of his countenance Raymond Venables once more stepped out before the drop-scene and faced the expectant audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, in a ringing voice, "You will all rejoice to hear that Miss Harlow has consented to appear to-night. In a few minutes she will appear on the stage in person to ask for an endorsement of her talent."

A perfect storm of applause rent the auditorium. At the eleventh hour the situation had been saved. When the curtain went up and Hazel was discovered seated alone in the room where the enactment of the drama first started another outburst of cheering proved how great was the hold the beautiful young actress had upon her audience. It was some moments before she was enabled to speak the opening words of her part and then not until she had bowed again and again to an audience worked up to concert pitch by the diplomatic speeches of Raymond Venables. How she got through her part that night no one but Hazel ever knew. Once or twice it was only by a tremendous effort that she prevented herself from breaking down entirely.

CHAPTER V.

After the performance, Raymond Venables insisted on carrying off Hazel, Eric, and Jenny to supper at the Metropole, where Hazel had promised to relate her adventures of that most thrilling day.

The street-arab who had been responsible for the rescue had been bidden by Eric to come round to his rooms near Stephen's Green early the next morning to receive the promised reward.

After the supper had been done full justice to, Hazel began her narrative. She told them how she had been struck by the miserable appearance of the woman in Wicklow Street, how she had been lured to Molly Malone's by the plausible creature who was subsidised by the queen of the beggars.

There is no need to recapitulate the story in full here as my readers are already fully acquainted with the facts up to the incarceration of Hazel in the inner chamber.

"I had scarcely been in the room two minutes," she said, "before a sound above me attracted my attention. The glass skylight suddenly opened and I heard a voice say: 'Look out, lady, there's a ladder coming down.'

"To my intense amazement, a rope ladder fell noiselessly almost on to my head. 'Quick,' said the voice, 'Can you do it?'

"Now, you must remember, that ever since a child, I have been used to all sorts of agile pursuits. About a farm there is always plenty of work to bring one's muscles into full play. Many a time as a girl have I swung myself up into lofts or on to the top of a hayrick by means of such a ladder. I did not pause to think who the owner of the voice was or where I might find myself should I succeed in making good my escape. I only knew that a few feet away from me was a terrible harpy of a woman and a man whom I have more occasion to hate and fear than anyone else in all the world, for at the moment of setting my foot upon the lower rung of the ladder I had heard the voice of him who I knew would give all he had to get me in his clutches. Up the swaying ladder I went without a sound. When I reached the roof above it was to find myself on the leads of a house beside the very boy who was the means afterwards of bringing you, Eric, to my ultimate rescue. Noiselessly he shut down the skylight and together we crept across the roof, through an attic window into a deserted house. I was then conveyed to a squalid chamber and locked in there until the night. You can imagine how terrible that lonely waiting was, yet somehow I felt that the lad who had so strangely befriended me would not deliver me up into the hands of my enemies. I had given him a bunch of flowers at the theatre last night and he apparently had dogged my footsteps ever since."

That was the end of Hazel's narrative and the end, so far as she was concerned, of further adventures in Dublin.

At the appointed hour the next morning the street arab made his appearance at Eric's lodgings.

The boy spoke well, and street-arab as he was, brought up in the midst of criminality and vice, Eric saw that he had in him the making of perhaps a fine man, and instinctively felt that in handing him this sum of money it would not be misplaced.

"And when you get to America, Tim," he said, "you must write and let me know how you're getting on."

"Shure and I will," said Tim, "though I can't write yet I'll be after making someone write for me."

Mother Malone and her gang was split up and the old beldame imprisoned for her misdeeds though the punishment came somewhat tardily. As for Horace Caldecott the base means he had endeavoured to use in order to accomplish his fell ends had, as we have seen, proved his undoing.

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In order for a man to have faith in such an invention, he would have to know Harrison Ely. For Harrison Ely was a genius. I had known him in college, a man amazingly dull in Latin and Greek and even in English, but with ideas of his own that could not be expressed in language. His bent was purely mechanical, and found expression in innumerable ingenious contrivances to facilitate the study to which he had no inclination. His self-acting lexicon holder was a matter of admiring wonder to his classmates, but it did not serve to increase the tenacity of his mental grasp upon the contents of the volume, and so did little to recommend him to the faculty. And his self-feeding student lamp admirably illuminated everything for him save the true and only path to an honourable degree.

It had been years since I had seen him or thought of him, but the memory is tenacious of small things, and the big yellow envelope which I found one morning awaiting me upon my breakfast table brought his eccentric personality back to me with a rush. It was addressed to me in the Archimedean script always so characteristic of him, combining, as it seemed to do, the principles of the screw and the inclined plane, and in its superscription Harrison Ely stood unmistakably revealed.

It was the first morning of a new cook, the latest potentate of a dynasty of ten who had briefly ruled in turn our kitchen and ourselves during the preceding three months, and successively abdicated in favour of one another under the compelling influences of popular clamour, and in the face of such a political crisis my classmates' letter failed to receive immediate attention. Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the latest occupant of our culinary throne began her reign with no conspicuous reforms, and we received in gloomy silence her preliminary enactments in the way of greasy omelette and turbid and flavourless coffee, the yellow screed of Harrison Ely looking on the while with bilious sympathy as it leaned unopened against the water-bottle beside me.

As I drained the last medical drop of coffee my eye fell upon it, and needing a vicarious outlet for my feelings toward the cook, I seized it and tore it viciously open. It contained a letter from my classmate and half a dozen printed circulars. I spread open the former, and my eye fastened at once upon the sympathetic exordium:

"Doubtless, my dear friend, you have known what discomfort it is to be at the mercy of incompetent domestics——" But my attention was distracted at this point by one of the circulars, which displayed an array of startling, cheering, alluring words, followed by plentiful exclamation points, that, like a bunch of keys, opened to my enraptured vision the gates of a terrestrial paradise where Bridgets should be no more and where ill-cooked meals should become a mechanical impossibility. The boon we had been sighing for now presented itself for my acceptance, an accomplished fact. Harrison Ely had invented "An Automatic Household Beneficent Genius. A Practical Realisation of the Fables Familiar of the Middle Ages." So the circular set forth.

Returning to the letter, I read that Harrison Ely, having exhausted his means in working out his invention, was unable to manufacture his "machine" in quantity as yet; but that he had just two on hand which he would sell in order to raise some ready money. He hoped that I would buy one of his automatons and aid him to sell the other.

Never did a request come at a more propitious moment. I had always entertained a kindness for Harrison Ely, and now such was my disgust at the incompetence of Bridget and Juliana and their predecessors that I was eager to stake the price of a "Household Beneficent Genius," on the success of my friend's invention.

So, having grasped the purport of the circulars and letter, I broke forth to my wife:

"My dear, you've heard me speak of Harrison Ely——"

"That man who is always so near doing something great, and never has done anything?" said she.

"He has done it at last," I declared. "Harrison Ely is one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever seen. He has invented an 'Automatic Electric Machine Servant.'"

My wife said: "Oh!"

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There was not an atom of enthusiasm in that "Oh!" but I was not to be daunted.

"I am ready," I resumed, "to invest my bottom dollar in two of Harrison Ely's machine servants."

Her eyes were fixed upon me as if they would read my very soul. "What do they cost?" she mildly asked.

"In comparison with the benefits to be derived, little enough. Listen!" I seized a circular at random, and began to read:

"The Automatic Household Genius, a veritable Domestic Fairy, swift, silent, sure; a Permanent, Inalienable, First-class Servant warranted to give satisfaction."

"Ah!" said my wife; and the enthusiasm that was lacking in the "Oh!" made itself eloquent in that "Ah!" "What is the price?" she asked again.

"The price is all right, and we are going to try the experiment."

"Are we though?" said she, between doubt and desire.

"Most assuredly; it will be a saving in the end. I shall write to Harrison Ely this very night."

The return mail brought me a reply stating that two Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Geniuses had been shipped me by express. The letter inclosed a pamphlet that gave a more particular account of the E. A. H. B. G. than the circulars contained. My friend's invention was shaped in the likeness of the human figure, with a body, head, arms, legs, hands, and feet. It was clad in waterproof cloth, with a hood of the same to protect the head, and was shod with felt. The trunk contained the wheels and springs, and in the head was fixed the electric battery.

The face of bisque was described as possessing "a very natural and pleasing expression."

Just at dusk an oblong box arrived by express, and was duly delivered in our hall, but at my wife's urgent entreaty I consented not to unpack the machines until the next morning.

"If we should not get the knack of managing them they might give us trouble," said this wise wife of mine.

I agreed to this, and having sent away Bridget with a week's wages, to the satisfaction of all parties, we went to bed in high hopes.

Early next morning we were astir.

"My dear," I said, "do not give yourself the least concern about breakfast; I am determined that Harrison's invention shall have fair play."

"Very well," my wife assented; but she prudently administered bread and butter to her offspring.

I opened the oblong box, where lay the automatons side by side, their hands placidly folded upon their waterproof breasts, and their eyes looking placidly expectant from under their waterproof hoods.

I confess the sight gave me a shock. Anna Mira turned pale, and the children hid their faces in her skirts.

"Once out of the box," I said to myself, "and the horror will be over."

The machines stood on their feet admirably, but the horror was not materially lessened by this change of position. However, I assumed a bold front and said jocosely:

"Now which is Bridget and which is Juliana—which the cook and which the housemaid."

This distinction was made clear by dial-plates and indicators set conspicuously between the shoulders, an opening being cut in the waterproof for that purpose. The housemaid's dial-plate was stamped around the circumference with the words: Bed, Broom, Duster, Doorbell, Dining-room Service, Parlour Service, etc. In a like manner the cook's dial-plate bore the words that pertained to her department. I gave myself first to "setting" the housemaid, as being the simpler of the two.

"Now, my dear," said I confidently, "we shall see how this Juliana can make the beds."

I proceeded according to the pamphlet's directions, to point the indicator to the word "bed." Next, as there were three beds to be made, I pushed in three of the five little red points surrounding the word. Then I set the clock connected with the indicator for a thirty minutes' job, thinking it might take about ten minutes to a bed. I did not consult my wife, for women do not understand machinery, and any suggestion of hesitancy on my part would have demoralised her.

The last thing to be done was to connect the indicator with the battery, a simple enough performance in itself, but the pamphlet of directions gave a repeated and red-lettered "Caution" never to interfere with the machine while it was at work. I therefore issued the command, "Non-combatants to the rear!" and was promptly obeyed.

What happened next I do not pretend to account for. By what subtle and mysterious action of electricity, by what unerring affinity working through a marvellous mechanism, that Electric-Automatic Household Beneficent Genius, whom—or which—for short we called Juliana, sought its appropriate task, is the inventors' secret. I don't undertake to explain, I merely narrate. With a "Click!" the connection was made, and the new Juliana went upstairs at a brisk and business-like pace.

We followed in breathless amazement. In less than five minutes bed number one was made, and in a twinkling the second was taken in hand, and number three also was fairly accomplished long before the allotted thirty minutes had expired. By this time familiarity had somewhat dulled that awe and wonder with which we had gaped upon the first performance, and I beheld a smile of hopeful satisfaction on my wife's anxious countenance.

Our youngest, a boy aged three, was quick to feel the genial influence of this smile, and encouraged thereby he bounced into the middle of the first bed. Hardly had he alighted there when our automaton, having finished making the third bed, returned to her first job, and, before we could imagine mischief, the mattresses were jerked about and the child was tumbled headforemost on to the floor.

Had the flesh-and-blood Juliana been guilty of such an act she should have been dismissed on the spot; but as it was no one of us ventured so much as a remonstrance. My wife lifted the screaming child, and the imperturbable machine went on to readjust the bed with mechanical exactitude!

At this point a wild shout of mingled exaltation, amazement and terror arose from below, and we hastened downstairs to find our son John hugging his elbows and capering frantically in front of the kitchen door, where the electric cook was stirring empty nothing in a pan with a zeal worthy a dozen eggs.

My eldest hopeful, impelled by that spirit of enterprise and audacity characteristic of nine-year-old boys, had ventured to experiment with the kitchen automaton, and by sheer accident had effected a working connection between the battery and the indicator, and the machine

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The Juliana and the Bridget were fighting for the broom.

in going off had given the boy a blow that made him feel, as he expressed, "like a funny bone all over."

"And served you right!" cried I. The thing was set for an hour's work and a half, according to the showing of the dial-plate, and no chance to stop it before I must leave for my office. Had the materials been supplied we might have had breakfast; but remembering the red-lettered "Caution," we dared not supply materials while that indefatigable spoon was grating in the empty pan. For my distraction Kitty, my eldest daughter of seven years, now called to me from upstairs.

"Papa, you had better come quick! It's tearing up these beds."

"My dear," I sighed, "there's no way to stop it. We'll have to wait for the works to run down. I must call Harrison's attention to this defect. He ought to provide some sort of brake."

We went upstairs again. The B. G. Juliana stood beside the bed which she had just torn up for the sixth time, when suddenly she became, so to speak, paralysed; her arms in the act of spreading the sheets, dropped by her sides, her back stiffened, and she stood absolutely motionless, leaving her job unfinished—the B. G. would move no more until we again wound her up.

I now discovered that I was hungry. "If that fiend in the kitchen were only at work on something substantial instead of whipping the air into imaginary omelettes," I groaned.

"Never mind," said my wife, "I've got a pot of coffee on the kerosene stove."

Bless her! She was worth a thousand beneficent geniuses, and so I told her.

I did not return until late that evening, but I was in good spirits, and I greeted my wife gaily:

"Well, how do they work?"

"Like fiends," my usually placid helpmeet replied, so vehemently, that I was alarmed. "They flagged at first," she proceeded excitedly, "and I oiled them, which I am not going to do ever again. According to directions I poured the oil down their throats. It was horrible. They seemed to me to drink it greedily."

"Nonsense! That's your imagination."

"Very well," said Anna Maria. "You can do the oiling in the future. They took a good deal this morning, it wasn't easy to stop pouring it down. And they worked obstreperously. That fiend in the kitchen has cooked all the provisions I am going to supply this day, but still she goes on, and it's no use to say a word."

"Don't be absurd," I remonstrated. "The thing is only a machine."

"I'm not so sure about that," she retorted. "As for the other one—I set it sweeping, and it is sweeping still!"

We ate the dinner prepared by the kitchen fiend, and really I was tempted to compliment the cook in a set

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speech, but I recollected myself in time to spare Anna Maria the triumph of saying, "I told you so."

Now that John of mine, still in pursuit of knowledge, had spent the day studying Harrison Ely's pamphlet, and he learned that the machines could be set like an alarm clock for any given hour. Therefore, as soon as the Juliana had collapsed over a pile of dust in the middle of the hall, John, unknown to us, set her indicator to the broom-handle for seven o'clock the following morning. When the fiend in the kitchen ran down, leaving everything in confusion, my much-tried wife persuaded me to give my exclusive attention to that machine, and the Juliana was put safely in the corner. Thus it happened that John's interference escaped detection. I set Bridget's indicator for kitchen cleaning at seven-thirty the next morning.

"When we understand them better," I said to my wife, "we will set their morning tasks for an earlier hour, but we won't put it too early just now, since we must first learn their ways."

"That's the trouble with all new servants," said Anna Maria.

The next morning, at seven-thirty precisely, we were awakened by a commotion in the kitchen.

"By George Washington!" I exclaimed. "The thing's on to time."

I needed no urging to make me forsake my pillow, but Anna Maria was ahead of me.

"Now, my dear, don't get excited," I exhorted in vain.

"Don't you hear?" she whispered in terror. "The other one—swe-eep-ing!" And she darted from the room.

The next sound I heard was like the dragging of a rug along the floor. I recognised this peculiar sound as the footsteps of the B. G. Then came a dull thud, mingled with a shout from Johnnie, a scream from my wife, and the terrified cries of the two youngest children. I rushed out just in time to see John in his night-clothes with his hair on end tear downstairs like a sheet of lightning.

The Juliana and the Bridget were fighting for the broom!

I comprehended the situation intuitively. The kitchen cleaning, for which the fiend had been set, had reached a point that demanded the broom, and that subtle attractive affinity which my friend's genius had known how to produce, but had not learned to regulate, impelled the unerring automaton towards the only broom in the house, which was now in the hands of its fellow-automaton, and a struggle was inevitable.

However, this was no time for investigating the exact cause of the terrific row now going on in the front hall. The Beneficent Geniuses had each a firm grip of the broom-handle, and they might have performed the sweeping very amicably together could they but have agreed as to the field of labour; but their conflicting tendencies on this point brought about a rotary motion that sent them spinning around the hall, and kept them alternately cracking each other's heads with a violence that ought to have drawn blood. Considering their life-likeness we should hardly have thought it strange if blood had flowed, and it would have been a relief had the combatants but called each other names, so much did their dumbness intensify the horror of the struggle, in the midst of which the waterproof hoods fell off, revealing their startling human countenances not distorted by angry passions, but resolute, inexorable, calm, as though each sustained in the contest by a lofty sense of duty.

"They're alive! Kill 'em! Kill 'em," shrieked my wife, as the gyrating couple moved towards the staircase.

"Let 'em alone," said Johnnie—his sporting blood, which he inherits from his father, thoroughly aroused—dancing about the automatic pugilists in delight, and alternately encouraging the one or the other to increased efforts.

Thus the fight went on with appalling energy and reckless courage on both sides, my wife wringing her hands upon the staircase, our infants wailing in terror upon the landing above, and I wavering between an honest desire to see fair play and an apprehensive dread of the consequences, which were not unjustified.

In one of their frantic gyrations the figures struck the hat-rack, and promptly converted it into a mass of splinters. In a minute more they became involved with a rubber plant, the pride of my wife's heart, and distributed it impartially all over the premises. From this they cannoned against the front door, wrecking both its stained-glass panes, and then down the length of the hall they both sped again, fighting fiercely and dealing one another's imperturbable countenances ringing blows with the disputed broom.

We became aware through Johnnie's excited comment that Juliana had lost an ear in the fray, and presently it was discernible that a fractured nose had somewhat modified the set geniality of expression that had disguised Bridget's face in its prime.

How this fierce and equal combat would have culminated if further prolonged no one but Harrison Ely can conjecture, but it came to an abrupt termination as the parlour clock chimed eight, the hour when the two automatons should have completed their appointed tasks.

Though quite late at my office that morning I wired Ely before attending to business. Long-haired, gaunt and haggard, but cheerful as ever, he arrived next day on fire with enthusiasm. He could hardly be persuaded to refresh himself with a cup of coffee before he took his two recalcitrant Geniuses in hand. It was curious to see him examine each machine, much as a physician would examine a patient. Finally his brow cleared, he gave way a little puff of satisfaction, and exclaimed:

"Why, man alive, there's nothing the matter—not a thing! What you consider a defect is really a merit—merely a surplus of mental energy. They've had too big a dose of oil. Few house-keepers have any idea about proper lubrication," and he emitted another little snort, at which my wife coloured guiltily.

"I see just what's wanted," he resumed. "The will-power generated, and not immediately expended, becomes cumulative and gets beyond control. I'll introduce a little compensator to take up the excess and regulate the flow. Then a child can operate them."

It was now Johnnie's turn to blush.

"Ship 'em right back to the factory, and we'll have em' all right in a few days. I see where the mechanism can be greatly improved, and when you get 'em again I know you'll never consent to part with 'em!"

That was four months ago. The "Domestic Raries" have not yet been returned from Harrison's laboratory, but I am confidently looking for the familiar oblong packing case, and expect any day to see in the papers the prospectus of the syndicate which Ely informs me is being promoted to manufacture his automatic housemaid.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a *P.W.* penknife to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, September 30th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. James Perkins, 95 Green Lane, Stonycroft, Liverpool, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

SHE: "Have you heard the three-year-old infant violin prodigy?" He: "Yaas! Heard him eight years ago in Vienna."

SHE: "You cannot kiss me with my consent." He: "Not once?" She: "No; but can't you see that I have left my consent at home?"

"YES," said Mr. Henpeq, "I, too, have my favourite flowers." "And what may they be, pray?" sneered his wife. "They are the ones that 'shut up' at night," he bravely managed to articulate.

CHARLIE SPARKES: "I should be sorry to marry a clever woman like that. Why, the other night, when he sent a telegram to say he'd be kept late in the city, she sent a message to his club saying she'd sit up for him till three."

SCENE: Mission room. Woman with little boy applying for soup ticket. Vicar's Wife: "Your little boy has a very bad cough, has he? Well, he looks well enough." Applicant: "Oh, indeed, lady, 'e 'as a 'orrible' cough. Coughs awful." (To little boy): "Cough for the lady, Billy."

BASHFUL MIKE (after a long pause): "I'm a-thinkin' I shall 'list an' go an' fight the Boers, Widdy McGay.' "Faith, thin, it's a poor sojer you'll make!" "Phwat de yez mean?" "Oh, nothin'. Only a man who kapes on callin' on a widdy for a couple o' years without pluck enough to spake his moind hasn't the makin' of a sojer in him."

A SCOTCH settler in Victoria was arrested for stealing a set of bagpipes from a musically-minded Chinaman. When the case came on for hearing the defence was ready and fluent. "I'm no saying," said the Scot, "that I didna' tak' the pipes, but I hold I was pairfitly justifyit in rescuin' the national instrument o' my ain country frae the hands o' a yellow-skinned chow like yon, wha kames his wee pickle hair like the tail o' an auld soo. I'm willin' enouch to pay the fine, ye ken, but I'm dashed if I'll gi'e back the pipes to siccan a jaundiced-faced birkie to desecrate any mair."

*OWNER of property (sternly, to tramp reclining on a mossy bank): "Don't you see that notice—'Trespassers will be prosecuted?'" Tramp (calmly): "No, I don't see it, fer I can't read." Owner of property. "Well, you know what it is now, so go!" Tramp: "Hexcuse me, mister, but I don't know what it is. I've only got your bare word fer it, and you're a puffect stranger to me. Fer wot I know to the contrary, the notice may be 'New milk sold 'ere,' or 'Cherries tuppence a pound,' or 'Welkim, weary wanderer.' Don't you lay your 'ands on me, mister, or I shall 'ave to see whether my stick is really a good old oak, or only a sugar stick!"

"MARY JANE, have you given the goldfish fresh water?" "No, mem." "And why not?" "They haven't drunk up what's in there yet."

AN Irish magistrate asked a prisoner if he was married. "No," replied the man. "Then," said his worship, "it's a very good thing for your poor wife."

"THERE are many things in this world to which we must shut our eyes," said the paternal Gibson. "Yes, pa, and soap is one of them," chimed in the pride of the family.

"WASN'T that young Mr. Tiff who left the house as I came in?" "Yes, papa." "Did I not issue an injunction against his coming here any more?" "Yes, papa, but he appealed to a higher court, and mamma said yes."

"Now, children," said the school teacher, "can you tell me of a greater power than a king?" "Yes, ma'am," cried a little boy, eagerly. "What, Willie?" asked the teacher (expecting the answer, "An emperor") benignly. "An ace," was the unexpected reply.

GREAT JURIST'S WIFE: "What makes you so tired to-night?" Judge: "I had to charge the jury with an important case this afternoon." Great Jurist's Wife: "Oh! I suppose it is a great strain to recall the details of the case." Judge: "It's not that. It's being obliged to talk to the jury thirty long minutes without meaning anything."

OFFICER (just landed on island, to shipwrecked mariner): "You have been here six months without anything to eat? My poor fellow, whatever did you live on?" Shipwrecked Mariner: "Well, you see, sir, I found that whenever I thought of my wife and family at home, a big lump came in my throat, so I swallowed the lump!"

A NEWLY-MARRIED Birmingham man had never been satisfied with his meals since his marriage, so he told his wife to get a cookery-book and consult it every time she was going to cook. Next day the dinner was just the same, and the wife, seeing the sad look on her husband's face, said: "Don't you care for the pie, John, dear?" "It's awfully hard and tough," he replied. "Well, dear, I did as you told me. I made it out of 'Livewell's Cookery Book,'" she lovingly answered. "I thought so," replied John; "but you might have taken the leather backs off; then I could have my teeth through it."

THE proprietor of a Birmingham restaurant advertised for a cook the other day. The first to apply for the berth appeared to be in every way suitable. But before engaging him the restaurant-keeper inquired if he could give him a tip for the 2.30 race. The cook's eyes brightened. He whispered a "dead cert.," and mentioned that he had five shillings on the horse himself. That was enough. The proprietor gave him a lecture on the evils of betting, and showed him the door. As he went out he saw another man about to enter. "Are you going to apply for the job?" he asked. "Well, if you are asked if you know anything about racing, say you can't tell a Derby winner from a coster's donkey." The man took the advice, was engaged, and commenced his duties. Presently the proprietor rushed to the speaking-tube and yelled to the new cook: "Calf's head one." Instantly the reply came: "Did he, by George? What was second and third?"

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Five Crisp £5 Notes to be Given to Readers Every Week.

£25 per Week if you will ask for it.

HERE IS THE SCHEME.

We have in our possession a considerable number of photographs of men, women, and children of all grades of society, secured for us by our agents, who have scoured the United Kingdom for this special purpose.

Each week we shall publish five of these portraits, and to each of the persons thus represented we shall dispatch the sum of £5, on his or her claiming same on a postcard addressed to

PORTRAIT DEPARTMENT, "SHORT STORIES,"
Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Although the persons whose portraits will appear in this competition are quite unknown to us personally, we have their names and addresses in our possession, and, therefore, a claim can be settled at once, without risk of fraud.

We may say that our agents are still at work all over the country. It is, therefore, possible that your portrait may appear without your knowing it at any moment. So you should watch SHORT STORIES.

HERE ARE THE FIRST FIVE PORTRAITS.

Is your portrait here? If so, drop us a post-card, and get £5. Five more portraits will appear next week.

All claims in connection with the above portraits must reach the address already given above by Tuesday next, October 1st.

Full names and addresses of the people represented in each number will appear in succeeding numbers, whether the five pound notes are claimed or not.

HOW TO MAKE A CLAIM FOR A £5 NOTE.

Simply write on a postcard these words:

> *The Portrait No..... (here put number of portrait) in the current number of SHORT STORIES is mine. Please forward a £5 note.*
> *(Name and full address.)*

Persons represented must claim for themselves. Claims made by other people on their behalf will be ignored.

No. 1.

No. 2.

A Pair of Blue Eyes.

Howard put both arms around her, held her close for an instant, and then released her. It was in broad daylight on a crowded street crossing; they were not related to each other, and he did not even know her name. It must be said in his defence that it would have been a great unkindness on his part to have done otherwise.

She was hurrying to catch the tram from which he had just descended.

The street was wet and muddy; she slipped and would have fallen had he not caught her just in time. She blushed "celestial rosy red" and raised a pair of startled blue eyes to his face.

"Oh, thank you," she stammered.

She was gone before he could speak.

All day the blue eyes haunted him. They came between him and his writing and danced on the pages of the *Lancet*.

Had he been less devoted, heart and soul, to his profession, it is to be feared that even his patients might have found him absent-minded, for he failed to see two of his best friends on the street, and at dinner that evening was so preoccupied that his mother worried lest he was working too hard.

Weeks passed and the memory of the eyes was fading into a regret.

Dr. Carston's telephone bell rang suddenly one night, in the small hours. He had just fallen asleep after a nineteen hour day, but he could not ignore the ring. The summons was imperative. A stranger had called the nearest physician.

"Pray come," she implored, "for I am afraid my father will die."

The sweet, girlish tones were eloquent of distress.

Howard dressed himself hastily and went downstairs. He could scarcely open the hall door, so strong was the wind.

"A doctor leads a dog's life," he muttered to himself as he went out into the storm.

The address given him was that of a boarding house a few streets away—one to which this was by no means his first visit. He found Mrs. Madison, the boarding house keeper, awaiting him in the hall.

"I am so glad you've come," she said. "Mr. Wharton is awfully sick, and the poor young lady, his daughter, is 'most scared to death."

The patient was so ill as to occupy the doctor's entire attention. The battle was for life. Hours passed before it was won, and the tired but glad physician was free to go.

"Now your father needs nothing but rest. Let him sleep as much as possible, and see that he has a cup of Mrs. Madison's beef tea when he wakes. I will call this afternoon," he said, looking at Mrs. Madison, although he spoke to Miss Wharton.

Howard went home to refresh himself with an hour's nap, a bath, and a cup of coffee before his office hours. At three o'clock he visited his new patient and found him doing well.

"You have saved his life," said Miss Wharton in a voice tremulous with gratitude, and she raised her eyes to Dr. Carston's.

Howard's head swam. He saw again a crowded street crossing, a waiting car, and held a slender, girlish form in his arms.

Miss Wharton's eyes were the violets of his dreams.

When Violet Wharton left for her country home she wore a new ring holding twin sapphires.

No. 3.

No. 4.

No. 5.

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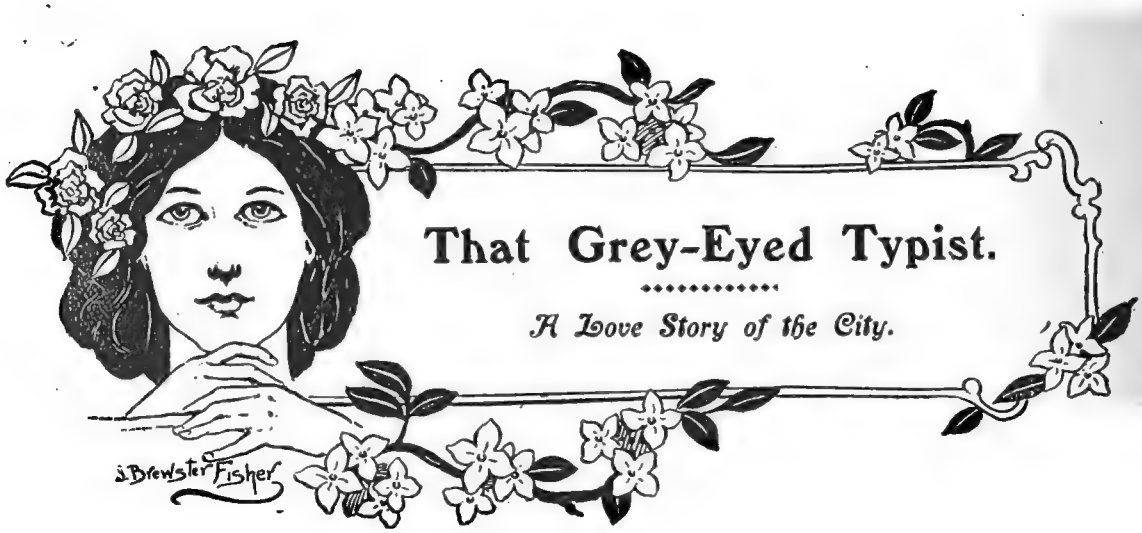

That Grey-Eyed Typist.

A Love Story of the City.

CHAPTER I.

In Which a Young Lady is Late.

"Hullo, Miss Merriman, have you been running after someone or running away from them? I saw you in Cheapside, but you actually outstripped my 'bus."

Doris Merriman—young, shy, simply dressed—coloured as she paused on the threshold of a small lobby that opened from one of the narrow streets off Cornhill and whose further extremity gave access to a flight of broad wooden stairs. The building through which it penetrated was dingy, plain, and single-storied. On a wall of the passage was a painted inscription—"Peter Adinsell & Company, Paper Merchants." Hard by this announcement stood Peter Adinsell in person, a tall, precise, yet not unattractive figure, in frock coat and silk hat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he was told confusedly, "but I am a little late, so I was hurrying."

Peter Adinsell consulted his gold watch with great gravity. "It is just five-sixths of a minute past nine o'clock," he said. "Miss Merriman, you deserve a lecture."

Doris cast down her eyes—they were grey, and clear as a mountain pool. "It—it shan't occur again sir," she faltered; "it was my bull-finch, he was very old, and he took a fit this morning and died as I was getting ready to come out. I had had him for years." And the last words of the sentence were muffled by a passionate regret.

The paper merchant coughed. "You foolish, sensitive child," he said. "I didn't mean a lecture for the odd fraction of a moment, but for tearing along at such a pace, exhausting and overheating yourself. Even commercial rules are entitled only to a reasonable observance."

He hesitated, looking at the sorrowful face of Doris Merriman, at her blush-rose complexion, her quick, intelligent glance, limpid with feeling, her slight, yet graceful frame and delicate gloved hands. The sunshine of the September morning gleamed on her trim braids of chestnut and tinged them with tawny gold.

"In any case," he pursued, "I have had it on my mind for some time to express to you my entire satisfaction with your work. Yesterday I instructed Pimm to pay you, in future, a certain addition to your present salary. There, no thanks. Run upstairs and get your notebook ready; I am going out of town for best part of the day, and must polish off my letters as rapidly as possible."

Peter Adinsell had relapsed into his habitual dry demeanour and air of command. Although he was a practical trader, the employer of Miss Doris Merriman was no mere business man. At forty the head of an ancient and prosperous firm—whose vast connections were out of all proportion to their modest methods—Mr. Adinsell was a wealthy bachelor with a few magnificent hobbies.

The very newspaper which he held contained his name in large capitals — he had been entertained the preceding night at a public dinner that celebrated the devotion of some third of his fortune to national purposes. His integrity and frugal customs were a proverb in the City, as his father's had been before him. He seldom used his own horses—the London Bridge omnibus that had brought him from his West-End home was even now on the way to its destination.

Doris—more than half consoled for the death of her favourite by the praise and tacit sympathy of the great Peter Adinsell—had darted up the gloomy flight which led to the scene of her labours. With characteristic consideration, the paper merchant lingered, for his typist to make her entry unaccompanied. Soon he was striding in at the swing-doors on the upper landing—the whole of the second floor was occupied by the offices of his firm.

Miss Merriman had seated herself at her typing-table near the entrance to his own private apartment, and was cleaning her machine. The bell tinkled musically as she drew the carriage of the typewriter to and fro. A melancholy form, gaunt, deferential, slightly bald, was stooping over her, laying out at her elbow a batch of papers with deliberate gestures of instruction.

"Morning, Pimm," remarked Peter Adinsell, crisply, putting his umbrella in the rack. The other turned to bow. He was a privileged servant; twenty years of life had Thomas Pimm sold to the house of Adinsell; his junior clerkship dated back to the termination of

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his schooldays, and he had climbed by degrees to the full control of the staff.

"Good morning to you, sir," said the cashier. "There is a heavy mail in. Are you going down to the mill this afternoon, sir?"

"Probably," was the answer, "if I can slip off early enough. Will you take your book into my room, Miss Merriman?"

Doris obeyed, and Peter Adinsell put a low query to the cashier. "Has Goulder condescended to arrive, yet?" he asked.

Pimm flung an optical query across the office. A stool at the high desk in the middle of the floor was empty; the others were tilted at various angles and occupied by busy writers, all the busier for their master's presence.

"No, sir," said the cashier, rubbing his hands deprecatingly.

The paper merchant wrinkled his brows. "Bad, bad!" he muttered. "The fellow gets worse. Lucky he is my nephew and not my son, Pimm."

"Indeed yes, sir," agreed Pimm. "The prospect of the firm ever being 'Adinsell and Son' seems—begging your pardon, sir—to be growing fainter and fainter." And the cashier tittered at his own retort.

"Heigho!" sighed Peter Adinsell; "I don't suppose I shall marry, Pimm. I must contrive to occupy my spare time with building libraries. My poor sister's fate ought to be a warning to me. If I had a child like Cecil Goulder I would——"

"*Sssh*, sir!" interrupted the cashier; "here he is."

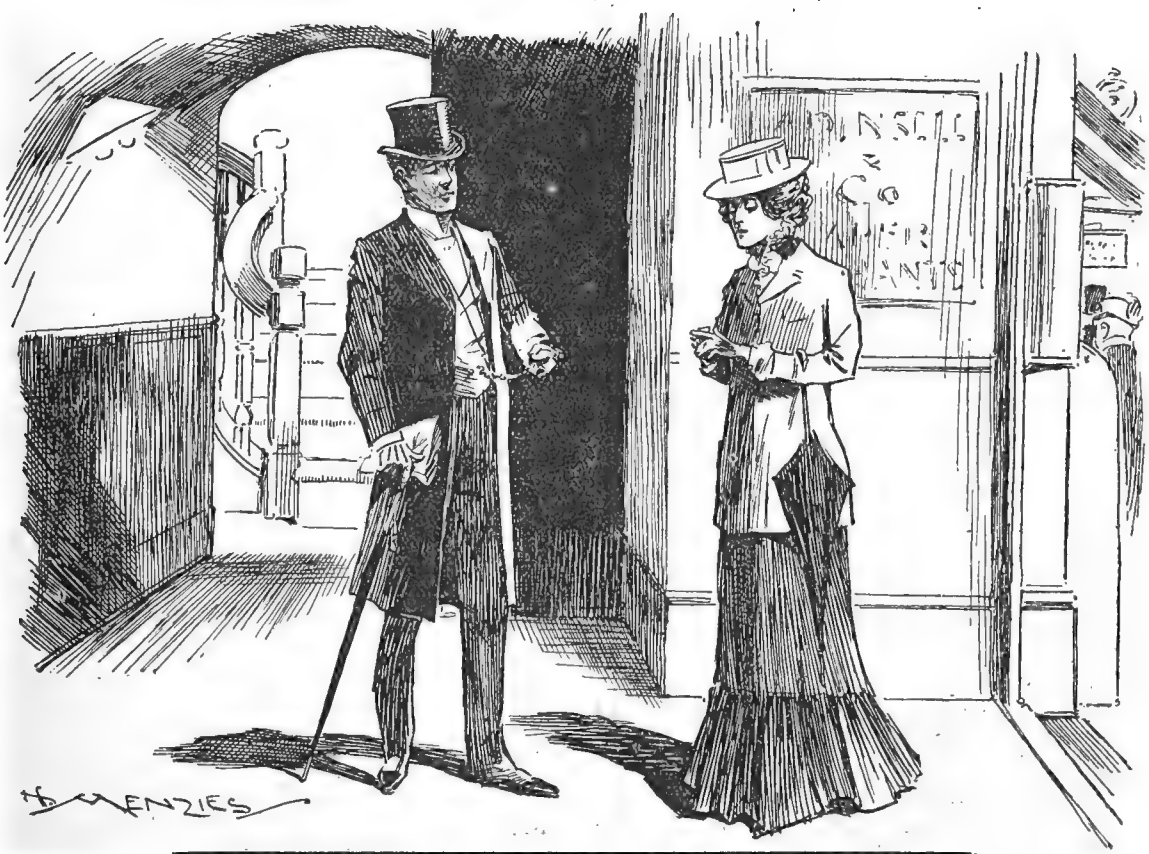
The merchant spun about. The door of the principal office had been thrust ajar and a slouching personage slid in—a personage limp and leaden of gait, with blood-shot eyes, purple lips, and a yellow skin. The clerks peeped covertly over their shoulders and nudged one another. Peter Adinsell walked to the newcomer.

"This is not a fit condition in which to approach the tasks of the day," he said. "Dissipation is stamped upon you, unhappy boy! Will nothing rouse you to your folly?—I believe you spend at the bar or at billiards three in four of your leisure hours."

His nephew scowled, but modified the insolence of his bearing by a miserable whine.

"Who's been lying to you about me?" he grumbled. "Don't you see I'm ill? I can't sleep of nights—that's what's the matter, uncle."

The merchant frowned and walked away from his young relative towards the apartment where Doris Merriman sat with pencil and note-book.



Peter Adinsell consulted his gold watch with great gravity.

£5 notes waiting to be claimed. See page 400.

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"Have those bonds come in from the brokers, Pimm?" he asked, halting on its threshold.

"The ones for the Adinsell Trust, sir," said the cashier. "No. Shall I ring up?"

"Do," replied Peter Adinsell, and passed on into his private room. With a growl of sulky ill-temper, Cecil Goulder clambered on to the vacant stool, picked out a pen, opened a big ledger, and began to work.

As the paper merchant shut the door, he caught a glimpse of his nephew and sighed again. Then he dropped into the swivel-chair at his massive desk and smiled—his gaze had encountered the pretty, thoughtful, face of his little typist. Within the last few moments he had awakened to two unsuspected facts—the possible tragedy of a bird's death and the subtle charm of Doris Merriman's features.

"Forgive my keeping you waiting, Miss Merriman," he observed, and reached to his letter-basket. For a quarter of an hour he raced through correspondence and composed replies while Doris's pencil flew over the ruled pages. She wrote a neat, almost microscopic, shorthand, nervous but fast—it attracted her employer's attention and he paused.

"Do you know," he inquired contemplatively, "I have never noticed till now what a beautiful thing a sheet of your shorthand is? It is as dainty as you are—and you are very dainty."

The scarlet flamed up in Doris's cheeks at his compliment. He was delivering her the missive to which he had dictated the response. Their fingers touched. Peter Adinsell's were white and strong, Doris's slender and tremulous. Something of her excitement seemed to communicate itself to the merchant—his almost haughty countenance became flushed and irresolute.

A tap sounded at the door, and Peter Adinsell looked up as Pimm entered the apartment.

"I am going to the bank, sir," the cashier announced. "Have you anything for your private account? I have heard from the broker's, sir; they are sending the bonds across."

"Thank you, Pimm," said the paper merchant. "No; there is nothing you can do for me."

His tone was sharp and decisive. He had regained in a flash the demeanour of a man of business. When they were alone again he concentrated himself upon his correspondence, and with a stern brevity, finished the dictation of the replies. Doris secretly admired her masterful employer; but after his bewitching lapse into friendliness, his return to the previous and more familiar mood abashed and chilled her.

As she rose to leave, something in her expression won Peter Adinsell from his absorption, and his features relaxed.

"Tell me," he desired, "have you no other friends—animal or human—to balance the loss of your bullfinch?"

Doris shook her head frankly. "I have the people I live with," she allowed. "They are relations—my father and mother are dead. But I don't quite think my aunt and uncle are friends—not exactly. Poor Bully was a darling. He had such quaint ways that only I understood—he would perch on my thumb, and hop up on my arm, and even kiss me."

She stopped, blushing, and commenced to twist the knob of the door. Peter Adinsell smiled.

"After all," he said, "Bully's virtue had its reward." And he studied her mischievously. Doris wondered how she could have imagined him old; the gaiety of youth had leapt into his face with that smile. But she was not lacking in self-respect, and her employer's observation was certainly a trifle daring. So she grew grave abruptly.

"Will you be able to sign your letters if you are going out of town, sir?" she asked, changing the subject with feminine skill.

The merchant bit his lips amused at her tact. But he did not choose to apologise for his audacity. "I shall come back later," he said, "on my way West from the station. You can leave them, with the envelopes, in here, and I will post what are urgent."

Doris gathered up her papers to depart, vaguely conscious that she had made the acquaintance of a hitherto unsuspected side of Mr. Adinsell's character. As she opened the door, one of the clerks appeared in the entrance.

"A messenger from Grimwood's, the brokers, sir," he announced. The merchant nodded.

"Let him step through," ordered Peter Adinsell, and Doris slipped out, while the smart Stock Exchange emissary, with his chained portfolio in his hand, passed into the room. The door shut, closed by its spring.

The typist settled herself at her machine, found the first page of the morning's dictation and started to tap out the translation. The clerks scrutinised her, from a distance, in their usual free fashion. Between the cashier's corner, which she shared, and the main section of the office was, however, a stout, waist-high railing.

Nearest her, in virtue of this arrangement, there lolled upon a mahogany slope of the ledger desk the person reproved so recently by Mr. Adinsell for his tardy arrival and dissolute appearance. From time to time he cast at her a leer of vulgar admiration. The broker's messenger treated her to a scarcely less appreciative review as he hastened out, swinging a portfolio much reduced in bulk. Doris proceeded collectedly with her typing. She was used to these masculine peculiarities.

At length a latch clicked and the paper merchant himself strode forth, polishing his hat on the sleeve of his frock-coat. Of fine proportions, military bearing, and fastidiously correct garb, he might have challenged comparison, in a romantic sense, with any—even the youngest—of his clerks.

He paused at the typewriter table and laid something upon it. "Tell Pimm I am off to Barbury," she was instructed; "and give him this key—that of my private safe. He has the keys of the general one, so I have locked up temporarily in my own the bonds which Grimwoods have sent over. He must carry them to my solicitors—he knows the business, it is that of the Adinsell Trust. The key he must retain until morning. You will not forget to place my letters on the desk in my room against my return. Good-day, and do not hurry again as you hurried this morning. I would not like my little secretary to fall ill."

Doris accepted the shining steel thing and hooked it on her office chatelaine. Peter Adinsell watched her action approvingly, repeated his farewell, and walked from the office. As he passed out he looked back at his typist, and his grave mouth softened into an expression that might have been affectionate, that might have only been sympathetic, but which was certainly pleasant.

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CHAPTER II.

In Which Something is Lost and Found.

"I say, Miss Merriman, old Pimm's a deuce of a time. Suppose he's taking it easy because the governor's off for the day."

It was Cecil Goulder who spoke. He had abandoned his stool, crossed the office, and leaned upon the railing by which Doris sat at her typewriter. She tapped out the close of a paragraph, added a "Faithfully yours," drew the sheet from the machine, and inserted another.

"I shouldn't suppose anything of the sort," said Doris severely. "Mr. Pimm is not that kind of man; he has only gone to the bank." She turned to another page of her note-book, found the corresponding missive, and began to make the typewriter click once more.

Cecil Goulder did not accept the hint. Though he allowed the subject of the cashier's absence to drop, he remained obstinately at her side. "Beastly dull tack, that," he commented; "I couldn't swallow it, I tell you straight. It's as much as I can do to stand double entry, and that's merely owing to the fact that I can refresh myself with an occasional glimpse of you, Miss Merriman."

"Don't be silly," desired Doris; "and please go away—you're hindering my work. These replies must be finished for Mr. Adinsell, and Mr. Pimm has a lot of statements he wishes me to type."

"What's the use of my going away?" grumbled the other. "I'm stuck till old Pimm gets back—honour bright I am. By the bye, you heard the governor jawing me just now—if you didn't you might have done, he shouted it loud enough. Precious considerate he is of my feelings. Oh, hang it, Doris," he broke off, "stop that dashed rattle!" And a shaking palm—mute witness to Mr. Goulder's shattered health—was laid upon her wrist.

Doris Merriman snatched her arm free. "How dare you!" she exclaimed under her breath. "And if you call me by my Christian name again, I'll——"

Cecil grinned. "What will you do, Miss Straightlace?" he demanded. "Complain to my uncle—a pretty matter to complain about. There, don't create a scene before the whole office and I'll be good."

He lounged against the barrier, critically perusing the lines of violet print she was tapping out. His broad shoulders effectually screened her from the view of the interested clerks beyond, and Doris winced as she heard them whisper and laugh. But she understood the character of her persecutor and favoured him with no further response of any description. At last he moved off, growling in a spiteful undertone.

Mr. Goulder had some reason, however, to remark upon the cashier's delay in returning from the bank. A couple of hours had elapsed since Mr. Pimm's departure; the majority of the clerks were preparing to leave for their lunch. Cecil Goulder chose to remain, apparently engrossed in the despised double entry.

Soon there were only left, with the exception of the laborious Cecil, the small errand-boy, eating his package of bread and butter in a corner, and Doris Merriman, still operating her machine and availing herself of chance pauses over her shorthand notes to consume a sandwich.

Finally Cecil glanced up. "Not going out to lunch, Miss M.?" he called. "Bad for your complexion, you know."

"I am too busy," said Doris coldly, and went on with her clash of bars and roll of wheels. Mr. Goulder scowled—perhaps at the manner in which the retort was delivered—and slamming his ledger, reached to his hat and slouched from the apartment.

Glad to be rid of his presence, Doris finished her sandwiches, rinsed her finger-tips, and devoted herself to the completion of her task. The morning's mail was, as Mr. Pimm had announced, exceptionally large, and most of the replies were lengthy.

A summons in the outer vestibule interrupted her. At the wide counter that shut off the entrance of the suite of rooms from the exterior landing a uniform had appeared, and its wearer, seeing no one at the long desk in the main room, had uttered a stentorian "Telegram!" Doris crossed for it. It was addressed rather curiously, to—

Office,
Adinsell & Co.,
40, Chitling Street, E.C.

Doris opened the buff envelope and unfolded the message. It read:—

"Knocked down cab in Cheapside this morning. taken hospital insensible and sent on home. Only shock—return to-morrow.—Pimm."

The girl gazed at the words. Suddenly there flashed into her mind the remembrance of Peter Adinsell's order—the bonds in the private safe—they were to be delivered by Mr. Pimm to the lawyers. What ought to be done about them? Mechanically her hand drew up her chatelaine to touch the key which had been given her. It was gone!

"Any answer, miss?" asked the bringer of the telegram, staring inquisitively at her white face and drawn lips.

"N-no, no," murmured Doris confusedly, and sprang back to her chair. Eager to terminate her own alarm, she looked about it, beneath it, in the hollows of the typewriter, on the table, under the adjacent hearthrug. Ransack and examine as she would, the key had vanished.

The forehead of the little typist grew damp. In the private safe to which that missing slip of steel possessed the power of entry, were the bonds representing Peter Adinsell's gift to the Adinsell National Library Trust—oil bonds, railway bonds, canal bonds, Government bonds, all first-rate negotiable securities, and worth two hundred thousand pounds. She had placed the key on the strong metal chain that swung from her waist, Peter Adinsell had watched her secure it, and now it was there no longer, and neither her employer nor the kindly Mr. Pimm were near to provide against the dangers of the loss.

Suddenly a thought struck her—a thought that sent the blood rushing to her temples and produced bewildering gleams before her eyes. She was certain that she had threaded the key upon the split-ring of her chatelaine. From that time till she crossed to the counter to receive the wire she had not moved, nor had anyone approached her, save Cecil Goulder.

The recollection was electrical. She suspected the purpose of his forced conversation over the rail, his nearness to her, his dawdling attitude and restless actions. He must have caught the sentences exchanged between herself and Mr. Adinsell, and between that gentleman and the cashier, respecting the bonds from Grimwood's for the Adinsell Trust.

What that trust was everybody knew—the morning journals were full of it. Peter Adinsell had said the previous night at a great West-End hotel during the

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Switched on the lights again and revealed to the would-be thief the trap he had fallen into.

course of a remarkable speech, that his brokers had bought him two hundred thousand pounds worth of "gilt-edged" bonds, and that, within a few days, his solicitors would hand them to the trustees.

Doubtless Cecil had heard also Pimm's telephonic inquiry, he had seen Grimwood's clerk visit Mr. Adinsell, he had learned that the bonds were deposited in his uncle's private safe, and—worst of all—he had gathered that the key of the said safe was in her charge. He alone could have pilfered the valuable article entrusted to her.

What should she do? Girl as she was, she realised that no scandal must taint the honoured name of Adinsell. Yet, if anything should happen to those bonds, Peter Adinsell would, she dare be sworn, replace the amount, even if it crippled his splendid resources. Oh, if Mr. Pimm had not been knocked over in Cheapside and sent home by way of the hospital!

She sat down at her typewriting-table to consider. One by one the clerks strolled in and resumed their occupations. But no Cecil Goulder was among them—the very fact was suspicious. A joke or two was cracked by his colleagues over his non-appearance, after which it provoked no further notice. Doris got up to announce the accident which had befallen Mr. Pimm, and returned to her work and her meditation.

So the afternoon wore on, with a trifle more of gossip and laughter than would have been possible in sight of Mr. Pimm or hearing of Mr. Adinsell.

Meanwhile Doris had come to a certain decision, in part execution of which she wrote a short missive, addressed it to her home, and had it posted. The errand-boy who took it was instructed to bring back with him from a convenient pastrycook's the materials for a fairly substantial meal. Doris Merriman had resolved to hold the fort in person.

When six boomed from Bow Church along thronging Cheapside, the staff began to melt away. Doris bade her colleagues good-night gravely; her machine was still clicking, and a small pile of "statements" lay at her elbow.

The last clerk gone, and with him the resentful errand-boy, Doris heaved a sigh of relief and hastened to set the door of the private room ajar. The sight of the black iron safe, solid and intact, comforted her.

This done, she ate her tea hurriedly. By seven o'clock at the latest the resident caretaker of the building would descend to clean out the offices, and her presence there be perceived. Picking up her hat and jacket, and removing the traces of her meal, Doris extinguished the lights and entered the private room of Peter Adinsell, to attack the second stage of her plan.

By the fireplace rose a tall, deeply recessed cupboard, usually kept on the latch, but supplied with a lock and

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key. In this Doris ensconced herself, and ...tened it from the inside. She had arranged an impromptu sofa of paper samples, and sank upon it, panting.

She was only just in time. The jar of bucket and dust-pan grated upon her ear, and through the chink of the door she could tell that the office had been re-illuminated. For twenty minutes the elderly charwoman bumped and banged, then quiet supervened. Doris was alone again. With a cautious sigh she stepped out of her prison and seated herself in the sacred swivel-chair of Peter Adinsell.

Everything was very dark and solemn. By degrees Doris's graceful head drooped upon her arms, her breathing grew regular, and, in spite of her efforts to remain awake, she dozed. Bow bells rang out the hour—eight o'clock, the quarter followed, the half ensued.

The latter chime had scarcely died on the air when a hand was placed upon Doris's shoulder. She started and looked blinkingly at the yellow rays of the electric pendant over Peter Adinsell's desk. In front of her stood the paper merchant, and with him was a feminine figure, silver-haired, but handsome, upright, and a trifle severe. Both Mr. Adinsell and his companion were contemplating amazedly the picture presented by Miss Doris Merriman.

Doris's heart leapt into her mouth, but she rallied her wits determinedly. "Please," she said, "I—I lost the key of the private safe, sir, and—and Mr. Pimm didn't come back, so I—I stopped to take care of it, because of the bonds."

Peter Adinsell wondered if he were dreaming. But Doris, with her lustrous grey eyes, her palpitating colour, her tremulous lips, was no dream. The merchant placed a chair for the elder woman.

"Sit down a moment, Bilhah," he suggested. "This is Miss Merriman, my typist. Miss Merriman," Doris was told courteously, "this is my sister, Miss Bilhah Adinsell."

A pause showed that Doris's employer was pondering the extraordinary situation in which he found her.

"Miss Merriman," he added, "your conscientiousness does you honour, and I am glad for your sake that I returned earlier than I anticipated on account of my sister journeying with me. You say that you have lost the key that I left in your charge. Will you not explain more fully?"

Miss Bilhah Adinsell rose and bent over the girl thus questioned. "Steady your nerves first, my dear," she advised, patting Doris's cheek. "Poor child! to stop here all alone, shut up and locked in. I declare it makes me melancholy to think of it."

"But why not have contented yourself with warning the caretaker?" demanded Peter Adinsell perplexed.

Doris faltered. "I—I fancied I'd better not, sir," she said. "I—I don't believe I lost the key—it—it was stolen. Oh, please don't ask me any more. No one knows I stopped. I wrote home that I was going to a friend of mine at Dalston, and I hid in your big cupboard while the office was being cleaned. And I know the safe hasn't been touched, for I watched it through a crack. Do be satisfied with that and let me go."

The paper merchant leant on the top of his desk and his dark eyes met Doris's reassuringly. "Trust us, Miss Merriman," he urged. "Whom do you suspect of stealing the key?"

Doris was saved the trouble of evasion or reply. A bell pealed below, and footsteps descended to answer it—the caretaker lived on the topmost storey. Instinctively the three persons in Peter Adinsell's room fell to listening. A latch clicked, and a familiar voice was heard dimly through the door and partition.

"Don't trouble to come up, Bateson," it said. "I have matches. I just want a letter I forgot to post and that must catch the mail."

The voice was the voice of Cecil Goulder. When he recognised it, the paper merchant leapt to the switches, snapped out the lights, and drew Doris and his sister into a sheltered angle. The next minute Cecil entered the apartment, a vesta burning in one hand and a key grasped in the fingers of the other. He was dressed in a heavy ulster and travelling cap, and had set down on the mat a distended Gladstone bag.

As he thrust the key towards the aperture of the safe beside the desk, his uncle switched on the lights again and revealed to the would-be thief the trap that he had fallen into.

Cecil Goulder's gaze wandered from Miss Bilhah Adinsell to her brother, and from Peter Adinsell to Doris. A spasm of hate contorted his features.

"Out-schemed, you jade!" he hissed. "But you shan't have the laugh of me, curse you!" He made a quick motion and levelled his arm. The paper merchant threw himself on his nephew, to wrest from him, dangerously, a small six-chambered revolver.

Peter Adinsell was too late. One of the cartridges had cracked ominously. Doris Merriman reeled back into the swivel-chair with Miss Bilhah supporting her.

CHAPTER III.

A Drive from the West.

"Now, my dear, if you are not quite strong again you are not going back to the City this morning. I can't understand what makes my brother so anxious to carry you off. I am sure Cadogan Square is better than Cornhill yet awhile for a young lady who has had a bullet through her shoulder."

Having given vent to this opinion, Miss Bilhah Adinsell rose from her chair at the dainty breakfast-table and went to bend inquiringly over Doris Merriman, who, a little paler and slighter, sat where she could look down into that part of the West End just mentioned by her hostess.

"I wish to go, too, dear Miss Adinsell," said Doris gently. "Indeed, I ought to have gone home that—that terrible night. But Shepherd's Bush was so far off, and Mr. Adinsell so determined. I—I think he got that City doctor who came to frighten me about the danger of travelling, on purpose. But he has been very, very kind."

Miss Adinsell took up her guest's cup and filled it from a silver tea-pot. "My poor child," she answered, "it was our own flesh and blood, worse luck, that had injured you. We were bound to make you comfortable. We would have done as much for the merest stranger."

"I suppose so," she murmured and sipped her tea, glancing about her regretfully. The breakfast-room at Peter Adinsell's house in Cadogan Square was a cheerful apartment, simple, bright, and yet luxurious. She had set in it for a dozen mornings now, and for more than a dozen before that, she had been given her morning meal in a cosy chamber adjacent to Miss Adinsell's boudoir. Hither she had been borne after h r startling experience in the City. Peter Adinsell had made himself entirely responsible for her restoration to health.

His sister was keeping an expectant watch upon the door. "Who can Peter have in the library?" she

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exclaimed. "He did not eat half a breakfast. And there is the carriage at the door. Peter said you must be driven back in state. I insisted you ought to have a holiday, but he only told me, in his masterful fashion—'I cannot do without Miss Merriman any longer.'"

There was a footfall at the entrance of the breakfast-room, and Peter Adinsell made his appearance. He was thoughtful, even gloomy; but his face lighted up as his gaze travelled to Doris.

"Are you ready? Miss Merriman," he asked. "Don't mind my sister's protests. I know she is anxious to keep you in Cadogan Square, but I am adamant."

Doris got up silently, and slipped away to don her familiar costume—the tiny toque and trim jacket in which she had gone down to the offices of Peter Adinsell & Company a whole month ago. The merchant waited in the hall, smoothing his silk hat abstractedly on his sleeve, as was his habit. Miss Adinsell kissed her guest as she passed down the stairs.

"Good-bye, dear," she said, "and thank you a thousand times for letting us hush up Cecil's dreadful deed," she whispered. "After all, he's our sister's only child, and an exposure would have killed her. Come and see me soon, and remember, whatever happens, I am your true friend."

The little typist could not reply—some mysterious emotion seemed to be choking her. She returned Miss Adinsell's kiss and hastened to descend, struggling for self-control. Her employer helped her into the brougham, the horses fretted, plunged, and were off on the road to the City.

Peter Adinsell studied her as she lay back against the leather cushions. "You could not guess, Miss Merriman," he observed, "what I have been doing this morning. But I have been bidding farewell to the unhappy lad whose criminal folly you helped to restrain, and who repaid you—with a bullet! He says he had been drinking that day—he asked me to tell you as much, though he dare not hope for your forgiveness. England, however, will know him no more. He sails for Australia to-morrow."

Doris interlaced her fingers and whispered that she wished him prosperity.

"You wonder at my hastening your return to the office," said the paper merchant after a pause. "I had a reason. While you remained under my roof I did not think it fair to approach a subject that demands your attention—and mine. I desire you to relinquish your situation with Adinsell & Company."

He glanced away from Doris Merriman's young countenance—it had grown white and piteous.

"You were too sensitive, too delicate, in a word too finely touched," he proceeded, "for the life of a business woman. I may say at once that I have found you a different sort of position—a—a more comfortable, and, I trust, a more attractive one."

"I am sorry," gasped Doris, "that you want to send me away."

"I did not say so," retorted the paper merchant. "You would still be, so to speak, with me."

"Would I?" said Doris, suddenly relieved. Peter Adinsell contemplated her tremulous lips and heaving bosom, and was encouraged to take his fate in his hands like a man.

"Yes," he murmured. "I—I cannot do without you. Doris, be my wife?"

Doris gazed at him astounded. But the merchant stole an arm around her and drew her to him. "And Miss Adinsell?" whispered Doris.

"Is at Cadogan Square on tenterhooks of expectation," was the response. "Doris, my darling, she—she said you wouldn't have me."

* * * * *

There was nothing but a call paid at the office that morning, for Peter Adinsell carried off his betrothed for a long drive in the park and a *tête-à-tête* lunch at Prince's. He did find time, however, to send a telegram to Miss Bilhah—a telegram that contained the one phrase, puzzling to all but the recipient: "I am not too old."

Mr. Pimm—long since recovered from *his* accident—saw them off from the doorway in Chitling Street, and as he turned to ascend the staircase, glanced at the inscription on the wall at his side.

"'Peter Adinsell & Co.,'" he muttered. "Ah, well, perhaps we shall alter that one of these days. But who would have expected Mr. Peter to fall in love with that grey-eyed typist?"

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Counsel for the Defence.

BY VAUGHAN DRYDEN.

THE bright June sunshine, pouring down on the grim walls of the Central Criminal Court, lights upon a kind of human fungus which has attached itself by means of one greasy, humped-up shoulder to the door-post, and never ceases from directing its evil red eyes into the hall, the while it sucks absently at a perfectly cold clay pipe of venerable appearance. Another human fungus, if possible more hump-shouldered, greasy, and red-eyed than the first, shuffles up.

"Court full?" it asks.

"Yus."

"Wot's on?"

"Mouf-piece bein' tried."

"Garn! A mouf-piece! Wot for?"

"Outin' a bloke."

The second fungus gives a hideous chuckle.

"Lummy!" it croaks. "A barrister up for murder. Ain't that lovely? That wins it—strite, it does. Lor', I'd like ter see that blooming mouf-piece 'ung. Wot a treat! We'll 'ave ter wet this. Come on, I've got enough for a pint."

The two fungi slunk across the road into a neighbouring public-house, being the sort of excrescences that do nothing except furtively invest even such innocent things as hospitality and conviviality with an air of vague guilt.

Inside the stuffy Court hundreds of eyes are measuring the prisoner's neck for the halter. Two ladies occupy seats on the Bench, their airy summer attire making the sword of justice above the judge's head look grimmer than ever. The case is no ordinary one, for a member of the Bar is being tried for his life.

Dermot McDonnell, the rising young barrister, is charged with wilful murder, and to the ladies on the Bench and the other spectators this is the tit-bit of the list. The fungi outside found a grim relish in the idea of a "mouth-piece" being tried for "outing a bloke." The same idea is naturally expressed differently by fungi and hot-house flowers.

The kind, wise face of the old judge is troubled. Every member of the legal profession, from his lordship to the most junior member of the Junior Bar, keenly feels the stigma which is hovering over their craft. Milton, K.C., who leads for the Crown, has been naturally moderate in his opening address.

"They all—even old Foxe on the Bench—want to get him off," grumbles a spectator with a taste for blood. "Great shame, I call it."

In opening the case Mr. Milton revealed the following facts:

The murdered man, Mr. John Maguire, was a retired merchant. He was a bachelor, of simple tastes and habits, and, though well-off, chose to inhabit a flat in Challis Mansions, Kensington. The prisoner, Dermot McDonnell, was his adopted son, and heir to all the property, which was considerable.

On the afternoon of the murder prisoner had lunched with deceased, with whom he had always seemed on affectionate terms. There was to have been a third at lunch, Mr. Kevin Roche, K.C., a life-long friend of the pri oner's, but that gentleman had an engagement to lunch with some friends at Ascot, it being Gold Cup Day. (Laug ter.)

His Lordship: "If there are any more of these unseemly interruptions I will clear the Court."

Resuming, the counsel for the Crown had said that the little party of two were waited on by George Sim, the deceased's own man. After lunch this man left the fla' for about half-an-hour, and on returning was horrified to find his master stretched on the floor quite dead, having evidently been murdered.

Deceased had been stabbed to the heart from behind, but in spite of all their exertions the police had not been able to discover the weapon with which the deed was committed. Witnesses would speak to sounds of a violent quarrel proceeding from the flat during the absence of Sim.

Mr. Milton sits down, and during the usual buzz and rustle which ensues the spectator with a taste for blood nudges his neighbour violently.

"What's the row?" asks the latter somewhat crossly.

"Say," mutters the spectator, staring with all his eyes at the knot of counsel below him, "see the man for the defence—him with the black whiskers and the scar on his forehead? Well, that's Roche, what ought to have been at the lunch but went to Ascot instead."

"Never!"

"It is, reely," affirms the bloodthirsty one. "They're pals, you know, and I suppose McDonnell fancied the other'd do for him better'n than a stranger would. Don't he look worried?"

Mr. Kevin Roche, K.C., certainly does look worried. His heavy brows are bent, his square jaw, blue with constant shaving of a strong beard, is set, and with a long, white hand he tugs irritably at the sparse clump of black whiskers which ornaments his cheek. A man of strong passions this, and iron will. The square chin, the mouth shut like a trap, and the fire in the deep-set eyes proclaim it.

McDonnell, the prisoner, is taking things more calmly than his friend and advocate. With one elbow lightly

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resting on the part of the dock, he has turned his fresh-coloured, healthy, pleasant face towards the impassive occupants of the Press-box.

He is not strictly handsome, just the ordinary, clean-limbed, clean-minded, healthy young Briton which our public schools turn out by the thousands, to the eternal glory of these islands. His frank, blue eyes are idly watching a reporter sharpening a pencil. Decidedly, if appearances go for anything, not the man to do murder.

The cold, clear tones of Milton, K.C., were heard. He is examining his witnesses. The medical and police witnesses are quickly drained and dismissed. Kevin Roche, tugging at his whisker, does not cross-examine.

George Sim, elderly, respectable, and terribly nervous, enters the box. Has been valet to Mr. Maguire for eighteen—beg pardon, gentlemen, nineteen years. Recollects prisoner as a boy. Prisoner had always been treated as deceased's son, and they had always been on the most affectionate terms, far more so than some fathers and sons. There might have been some disagreement about a young woman. Disagreement began about three weeks ago. Mr. Dermot—beg pardon, gentlemen, the prisoner—wanted to marry a girl to whom his adopted father objected. Waited on the two gentlemen at lunch on the day of the tragedy. They were very quiet, and only talked of ordinary subjects—politics, racing, and such-like. After lunch went out for half-an-hour with his friend, Jack Leroy, porter at Challis Mansions. Came back to find deceased murdered, and calls in police.

Mr. Roche rises to cross-examine. How can witness fix the time of his absence after lunch?

Witness looked at his watch as he left the flat and at the clock when he came back. Both kept good time. He went about three-quarters of a mile—as far as the Crown and Sceptre in Holland Road. Had two half pints of beer and came straight back. There was no quarrel between the gentlemen while he was in the flat.

John Leroy, porter at Challis Mansions, supported the last witness's evidence, and is not cross-examined.

Ida Thorne, young, smartly gowned, and extremely self-possessed, is the next witness. She occupies a flat just over the one in which (with a pretty little shudder) the tragedy occurred. The flats were supposed to be sound-proof; but, as a matter of fact, were not. On the afternoon of the murder she distinctly heard loud voices in the deceased's flat. It sounded as if people were quarrelling. She distinctly heard deceased say three times in a high voice "I will not! I will not! I will not!" Then prisoner's voice cried "Take the consequences, then!" After that there was complete quiet for a few moments. Then heard the door of the flat bang and prisoner run downstairs. Immediately after that she went out to rehearsal (being on the stage) and did not return till late.

Cross-examined, had not the slightest doubt that the voice and step she heard were those of prisoner. Knew them well. Prisoner was a constant visitor at the flat. It was about a quarter to three when she heard the door bang. Ten minutes afterwards she had left the Mansions. She had heard no sound of a struggle.

Minor Crown testimony being heard, Mr. Roche intimates that he intends to call no witnesses. There is a buzz and a murmur, "Won't put his man in the box. That's bad!" And the spectator with a taste for blood cranes his neck an extra half inch.

Every syllable in the cold, clear tones of the Crown's leading counsel is another tap of the hammer on the nails in the prisoner's coffin. There never was a clearer case made out against a man in that Court. The eyes of the counsel for the defence are like lamps in his pale face.

The prisoner has lost his easy air, and stands perfectly still, with his eyes fixed on the man whose clear voice is fitting the noose upon his neck. Now and then he gnaws his lip, and a sharp intake of the breath tells that some new, skilful bit of art in the great advocate's speech has come home to him. By the end of the peroration the prisoner's face has taken on a grey look of despair.

Roche rises, and there is a murmur of surprise and curiosity. There is hope and confidence in every gesture of the barrister, in every tone of his deep, rich voice. He faces Court, jury, judge and all, with a superb air. He seems confident of beating down the net that the skill of the Crown counsel has flung round his client, and delivering him from the hangman's hands.

With practised hand he tears to tatters the evidence. And lo! what does it amount to? One Crown witness is a self-confessed beer-bibber, another belongs to a profession never noted for cold accuracy of statement. In Heaven's name, gentlemen, what is such evidence worth?

It is a masterly exposition; the Court is as still as death as the advocate thunders on. The prisoner's face is flushed with hope; he clutches the front of the dock.

Consider now, gentlemen, the weapon with which the deed was done. Such knives, largely used by sailors, are sold in thousands every week——

Good God! what are they all staring at? The judge leans forward, his face like granite.

"Mr. Roche," he says, sternly, "let me remind you that the weapon was never found."

Lost! lost! The advocate's face is livid and wet, his eyes stare horribly, his mouth moves, but no words come. There is a murmur of many voices as Roche, counsel for the defence, sways forward and falls in a fit on the floor of the Court.

* * * * *

Among his papers afterwards they found a full confession. Kevin Roche, the great barrister, was a born gambler, and his affairs were hopelessly involved. His largest creditor was the murdered man. Desperate, his back to the wall, the gambler resolved that he would not stick at homicide if he could so mend his affairs.

The invitation to lunch on Gold Cup Day gave him the opportunity. He declined it on the plea of a previous engagement for Ascot, went there, and was actually seen on the course by a number of acquaintances, and rushed back to London after the first race.

Having watched Dermot McDonnell leave the flat, he went up, and was instantly admitted. While his unsuspecting host turned to the sideboard to procure some refreshment, Roche stabbed him from behind with a sailor's knife, with which he had provided himself. He left the Mansions unperceived and took train to the Temple.

His horror when McDonnell was arrested was intense, and he resolved to make an effort to save him by appearing for the defence. His blunder with regard to the weapon was fatal.

* * * * *

Two human fungi, slouching and red-eyed, blink evilly at their tankard.

"Wot 'appened to the mouf-piece?"

"Got orf."

"Lummy—wot a life, ain't it?"

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The Golden Dwarf

A Sensational Romance of To-Day.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "A Keeper of Secrets," "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. (*continued*).

"No," admitted Mr. Brasher, in a depressed tone; "I only wished to say that I have no news of Mr. Geddes. I wonder, Miss Connie, whether you'd pay me the compliment of so much regret if I were to disappear."

Connie gulped a sob. "The business is going to rack and ruin," she told him evasively; "father isn't fit to attend to it. He'll be poisoning somebody before long."

The Inspector scratched his head. "Talking about poisons," he remarked, "Geddes was more than a bit gone on poisons. He may have done away with himself in some experimental fit."

Constance Forester gave her favourite stamp. "It's absurd to suggest such a thing," she declared. "Mr. Geddes was too sensible. No; if he's come to any harm, Mr. Brasher, you're to blame."

"Well, I like that!" said Michael Brasher, ruefully.

"Yes, you are," persisted Connie: "he was trying to do your work, I'm sure of it. He was always worrying about Sir Christopher's murder and planning to get at the bottom of it. And a good job it would have been if he had been able to find out who killed the squire and prove that it wasn't Mr. Felix. Poor Miss Carew has just been driven from pillar to post since every old woman in Wyresdale took to scandalising Mr. Dering, and all the fine folks gave him the cold shoulder. Miss Carew's heart is broken, I'll be sworn, and—and—so's mine."

Connie dissolved into tears, and Michael Brasher left hastily—feeling that his position had become an ungraceful one. When he stepped on to the pavement outside the shop it was to see Otto Hare's phaeton flash by him, as he had seen it once before.

But this time the Golden Dwarf was not alone—though the rumble at the rear of the hooded front was empty. On the left hand of Otto Hare, as the swift roan cob sped down the High Street, sat Esther Carew, her delicate features drawn and her eyes fixed in a look of utter despair.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A Duel and a Discovery.

Spurt!

It was the scratch of a wax vesta struck cautiously upon a hard surface. The match burst into flame, and the sudden flame illuminated the features of Archibald Geddes. With a profound and foreseeing cautiousness, he had crawled over to that side of his singular cell at which the rock-hewn wall was diversified by the wooden portal.

Kraft had been armed, and the Scotchman was not inclined to risk being killed or disabled by a shot from the small moveable panel which he had observed in the upper part of the stout door. Crouched in the corner by it, he was comparatively safe from espionage or treacherous attack.

Puff! puff! puff! The chemist's assistant had set going a neat briar pipe. Its bowl had been filled—in the dark—for the fifth time. On each occasion Geddes had looked at his watch; he did so now; nine o'clock. More than twelve hours had elapsed since the light in the crimson globe had ceased to glow, and Archibald Geddes had been left to solitude and obscurity.

He weighed his rubber pouch—but a pipeful or two remained, and his match-case was almost empty. An over-powering hunger had seized upon him, the narcotic influence of the tobacco began to dull its pangs. He lay down at length on the harsh concrete and wondered if starvation were the fate to which Joseph Kraft had condemned him.

Hardy by birth and training, there was plenty of life in the Scotchman yet, despite his unconscionable fast. But his head ached with the continuous strain of his long vigil. For those twelve hours he had sat or lounged awkwardly, his hand on the bulb of his odd weapon, the ammonia-pistol; his muscles braced to make the most of its temporary effect on a possible foe.

As he pulled at his pipe, irritated by the absence of taste which the darkness lent the tobacco, but aware that it would sooth his ravenous appetite, he heard a sound—not that which had throbbed constantly about him like the purr of some huge animal, but a faint and wavering sound. It was the same, if he had only known the fact, which had startled Esther Carew when she paid her visit with Otto Hare, to the observatory on the hill.

Archibald Geddes drew his pipe from his mouth and whistled softly. The noise came once more, its nature was unmistakeable. He slipped to the door and lowered his ear to the threshold—an instant only, then he sprang back. A ponderous footstep was approaching without. The chemist's assistant retreated to his strategical angle and waited.

The footstep passed, and Geddes counted the moments. There was a splutter above him and the glow returned to the crimson globe that hung from the ceiling. It dazzled the Scotchman with a transient blindness.

At last there was a click at the door, and Geddes guessed that the panel had been opened. He flattened himself against the wall, so that he was invisible from the coign of vantage occupied by his enemy.

A period of suspense ensued. Finally a lock snapped, a bolt whined, the door swung in, and the lumbering form of Kraft entered. His plump fingers were extended before him and grasped a revolver.

The German had scarcely crossed the threshold when

£5 notes waiting to be claimed. See page 400.

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Archibald Geddes leapt at him sideways, and a mimic deluge of ammonia bespattered the eyes of Joseph Kraft. Geddes had recollected that his adversary wore spectacles and directed his aim to defeat this protection. The German dropped his revolver, which exploded in its fall, and clapped his hands to his face.

The chemist's assistant darted behind him, dashed through the door, dragged it to, and bolted it. Seeing that the panel was ajar, he closed and hasped it also. A second after, a shot came crashing through the wood —Joseph Kraft had turned to bay.

Archibald Geddes dodged out of range and paused to review his position. He stood in a narrow passage, dark but warm. Before him and at his back was a vague gloom. From the key-hole of the door he had so precipitately fastened by its slight bolt, streamed a ray of the deep crimson lustre that had illuminated his onslaught upon Kraft.

Opposite this streak of blood-red light another, and paler, ray of the same hue fell athwart the dusk. A pace in advance, a couple of similar beams, doubtless streaming through corresponding key-holes, stabbed the darkness with a shaft of bright pink and one of a still more delicate flush.

Further on, along the narrow corridor, a quartette of blue rays, similarly varying in the depths of their tints, slanted towards the floor, and in the end of the cramped lobby, a brace of white rays pierced the shadows.

Ten rays in all, four red, four azure, and two of a dazzling white: Geddes started at them, as though puzzled by the combination. The slender beams of radiance seemed to tremble under the constant mysterious vibration that shook his surroundings. Archibald Geddes roused himself to seek a means of escape.

He turned, and perceived, a few yards off, a thin crack, as of a door, through which there stole the wan, yet pleasant, shimmer of daylight. Geddes would have hastened to it. But in that very moment there came again the faint, yet arresting, sound he had heard in the cell.

CHAPTER XL.

"You Shall Be Mrs. Garland."

"There, so much for that! Pardon my trespassing on your patience, Mr. Dering, but if you could understand the delicacy of the little matters I have had to arrange, you would forgive the length of my correspondence."

Neal Garland flung down his pen and closed the flap of the envelope he had just addressed. He blotted deliberately the wet ink of the inscription and put the missive in his pocket. The suppressed merriment with which he had vaguely irritated and alarmed Felix Dering still flickered about his features. But the tone of his harsh and usually defiant voice was polite enough.

Mrs. Schwartz's singular lodger had been writing for over an hour—first a scribbled draught, then a clean copy, and, in the end, a duplicate of the latter. The rays of the lamp had served to illuminate the constant humorous twitches of his mouth as his thin lips trifled with cigarette after cigarette.

"I say," he observed, as he opened, for the tenth time, the case containing those articles, "excuse my not offering you one. But you seem so determined to be on your guard I was afraid you might suspect me of attempting to hocus you. Isn't your wrist tired, holding that confounded pig-sticker of mine in such an awkward fashion?"

Felix Dering started. Neal enjoyed for a moment his companion's surprise. "Come," he said; "you are too clever, Dering, to make such a mistake. If I had contemplated doing for you I should have tipped the wink to Keturah, and she would have smuggled me in a pop-gun of some sort. What good is steel against lead? As for the noise, bah! we could have whisked you out of sight, and explained to any inquisitive soul that I had been cleaning the thing and had an accident."

He blew a cloud and waved it clear of his grinning countenance.

"I cannot compliment you on your perspicuity, my dear fellow," he added patronisingly; "if you were smart you would not have been decoyed here, or, had you accepted the risk, you would have carried it through more cold-bloodedly. However, I am not inclined to complicate my position by violence, hence your practical safety. As a rule, when it is worth my while striking a bargain, I perform it. Reassure yourself, therefore."

Neal chuckled over his impudence, and going to the cellaret in the sideboard, got out a decanter, filled himself a glass of port, fetched it to the table, and consumed it between the puffs of his cigarette.

Felix Dering—not to be bluffed into unwariness—maintained both his silence and his grasp of the stiletto. He had forseen all the dangers so insolently sketched by Neal, but he knew that a resolute and athletic man, even slightly armed, may match, with a trifle of luck, the most desperate odds. The next move on the board was Mrs. Schwartz's, and he waited it calmly.

At length there was the rattle of wheels in the thoroughfare below, succeeded by a sharp knock upon the street door as the dismissed cab rolled away. A couple of persons mounted the creeking stairs without, the leader undoubtedly the massive lodging-house keeper herself. She strode heavily into the lamp-lit apartment, clad in a huge mantle and gaudy hat. On her heels followed a tottering creature, shawled and bonneted in a by-gone mode, with hollow, dirt-encrusted cheeks and hands like claws. It was the baby-farmer to whose tender mercies Keturah Schwartz had entrusted Brian Dering. Mrs. Schwartz pushed her convoy into a chair.

Neal sprang up, spat out an oath, and hurled his glass at the grate, on which it shattered into a thousand pieces.

"Where's the kid," he hissed; "Keturah, where's the kid?"

Mrs. Scharwtz pointed a disdainful finger at the hag she had escorted thither. "Ask her!" was the landlady's advice; "she's as tipsy as David's sow, or I wouldn't have got her here, drat her wooden head."

Neal Garland acted upon the recommendation and started forward, to catch the old crone by the back of the neck and snarl in her ear. "Speak up," he cried; "what have you done with the child?"

A cackling laugh was the answer. "He-he!" tittered the drunken baby-farmer; "I had a fine bargain of him and no error. Twenty pounds I had from Kitty there to adopt him and thirty from the party I got rid of him to. What has anyone to grumble about?—Kitty said she never wanted to see the brat again, nor aught concerning him, except it was his burial certificate."

Neal shook the decrepit figure in his anger. "Fool!" he exclaimed; "who did you sell the boy to?—tell me before I strangle you."

Keturah Schwartz thrust her irate partner aside. "That's not the way," she said; "now, Mrs. Dobson, you've got to give us what information you can. It won't harm you: I'll take care of that, and you may trust my word. Who had the child?"

The baby-farmer smiled—a half-shrewd, half-foolish smile. "I—I don't know," was her response: "names are risky in my business and consequently aren't mentioned. A child of four or five was wanted, well-grown and healthy, I was told, to send abroad to a family as wished to adopt one."

Felix watched acutely the faces of the three, who, ignoring his presence, had exchanged these few rapid sentences. Yet he could not but discern that Neal Garland was as disappointed as himself at the result of

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Mrs. Schwartz's mission. The features of this gentleman, however, were fast resuming their complacency. A glance passed between him and the fat woman. Neal assumed a more tolerant air and turned to the baby-farmer, the person to whom Keturah Schwartz had referred to as Mrs. Dobson.

"Perhaps you are correct," he admitted; "and we may have nothing to complain of. But as it happens, we desire to regain the child, and we need your help—you said it had been despatched abroad, where was the child to be sent?"

"Dear, dear, I am not sure," quavered the baby-farmer, "howsomdever, I think it was France. Or it may have been Russia—yes, I believe it was Russia. Some English folk out there it was for—the gentleman as bought the boy of me was a doctor and choosing it for them; he was most particular about the child being healthy. He-he, it was the only kid I had as was, so you can guess I hadn't had it long."

And the hag broke again into a shrill and cackling laughter. Neal slipped across the room.

"Mr. Dering," he said in an undertone; "I have done my part, as you see. The child was given to this creature to adopt—as you hear, she has sold it to be adopted elsewhere. Frankly I believe she is lying about the Russian destination of the child. But if she will not speak the truth nothing but the law will make her. That, though, is not my fault, and I claim the fulfilment of our agreement. I have set you on the track of the boy—allow me forty-eight hours, and then lay the police on the trail."

Felix reflected. After all, he was a Dering, and he had pledged his word. Also, he suspected that Neal and Mrs. Scharwtz, unscrupulous though they were—were but the minor villains of the plot which had been woven about him. He recollected the vague threats of Neal and decided against the wisdom of desperate measures.

"I have but a single condition to impose," he declared, "and that is that I learn, to my own satisfaction, the abode of this wretched creature. I propose to do so by accompanying her home, in a cab. Under the circumstances it is but too probable that I should be given a false one if I relied upon a verbal direction. On the condition I have stated, you may have your forty-eight hours' grace. It is now close on eleven o'clock. Upon the morning of the fourth day from now I will call in the aid of the law, as you suggest. After that, look to yourselves—I do not guarantee to shield you."

Neal called to Mrs. Schwartz. "Keturah," he said; "Mr. Dering has kindly offered to see Mrs. Dobson home to Whitechapel. He will thus assure himself of her actual address and prevent her being run over—or run in—on the road. Something would infallibly happen to her if she attempted the journey alone in her present degree of intoxication. Her limbs are as drunk as her tongue is sober."

Keturah Schwartz made an indifferent gesture of assent and went to rouse the tipsy baby-farmer.

"Wake up," she cried; "you're going back; we've finished with you, deuce take you." And she hustled the old crone from her chair and pushed her to the door. Felix followed—his brown right hand still clutching the stiletto in the shelter of his sleeve.

"The stairs are dark," he said; "have the goodness to go before me, Mr. Garland."

The other shrugged his shoulders and stalked down the rickety flight in the rear of Mrs. Schwartz and her charge.

Felix prepared to descend. As he set foot upon the top-most step he felt a touch on his arm, and glancing above him, saw that there leant over the balustrade of an upper flight a slovenly girl with sparkling eyes.

"I've been listening," she whispered: "I'm Louisa, the servant here, and I can tell you summat. Stop the cab at the street end and wait—I'll come after you. Ssss-t!"

And her mysterious message concluded, she vanished

The Day of Miracles not past.

A RETFORD FAMILY'S EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCE.

BILE BEANS CURE MOTHER, SON, AND DAUGHTER.

It has come to be a commonly accepted statement that the day of miracles has gone past. This is only partially true, for if many of the things done to-day had been done the day after that upon which Lazarus was raised from the dead, they would no doubt have been chronicled as miracles. For instance, the truly wonderful cure of Mrs. Turner, of Moorgate, Retford, and her son and daughter, by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness, would, doubtless, have attracted attention from the scribe, so sensational is it in its nature. Says Mrs. Turner, speaking to a *Retford and Gainsborough Times* reporter,—"For a long time I suffered so from weakness and debility that it was with difficulty I moved about. I had a constant feeling of heaviness at the stomach, and do what I would I could not get rid of it. My breathing was laboured and caused great pain. Many a time, when outside, I had actually to stand still in order to get my breath, so bad had I become. One day a neighbour gave me a few of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans, so I purchased more. From the time I began to take them I have gradually improved, until now I am quite well again." Mrs. Turner's daughter said she also had suffered from nervous debility, adding—"My strength left me, I became depressed, and lost all interest in everything. I could hardly move about. My mother gave me some of the Bile Beans, and I determined to give them a fair trial. The result is most satisfactory. Although only a short time has elapsed since I began to take them, my weakness and depression are gone, and my strength has returned. The Beans are certainly a wonderful medicine." Mrs. Turner told of the third cure in her family:—"A short time ago," said she, "my son could not go about his work in consequence of sick headache and dizziness. I gave him some of the Beans, and gradually his ailments ceased to trouble him. The Beans have done him worlds of good, and he is not slow to recommend them to others." Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled for nervousness, debility, indigestion, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, headache, pimples and face sores, anæmia, female ailments, rheumatism, sleeplessness, neuralgia, palpitation, and the after-effects of influenza. All chemists stock Bile Beans, or you may obtain them direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending prices, one and three-half-pence or two and nine.

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in the gloom. Felix Dering's pulses beat faster and he went vigilantly down into the lobby. Neal was whistling for a cab; Mrs. Schwartz piloted the baby-farmer to the level of the pavement.

"They are anxious for their own safety," he decided mentally; "otherwise I should not be permitted to leave without a struggle."

Having passed which comment on the situation, he entered a four-wheeler, seated himself opposite the baby-farmer, and was borne off. Keturah Schwartz had instructed the driver.

The landlady and her peculiar lodger regained the lobby and climbed to the first-floor parlour.

"To-morrow, Kitty," said Neal, putting an arm about the fat woman, "we shall be on our way to the Continent. You've wanted me any time these two years—well, I will be magnanimous. You shall become Mrs. Garland in Paris. Go and pack; we will leave the house for the tradespeople to quarrel over, you'd have had to skip soon, at any rate—to avoid a committal to Holloway for debt."

"And what about Felix Dering?" queried Mrs. Schwartz, pushing her cynical wooer away: "he will get us extradited before our honeymoon is well begun."

Neal grinned his characteristic grin. "Fate is on our side, Kitty," he responded; "of course, even if Dering had had a glimpse of the child, he would have gone back to Wyresdale without it to fall into a trap of my laying. As it is, he has plunged himself more deeply in the mire and the disappearance of the boy will complicate him beyond extrication. He could not have done a worse thing than to mix himself with that old witch Dobson."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Keturah Schwartz.

Neal Garland held up the letter he had written during her absence and under the very nose of Felix Dering. It was addressed:

The Inspector in Charge,
Police Station,
Wyresdale,
Derbyshire.

"Go and pack!" he cried; "pack, my dear Kitty—we must be out of England when this is opened."

CHAPTER XLI.

"It's a Queer Tale."

"Excuse my coming in beside you, sir, but I want to whisper. Perhaps the old cat isn't as drunk as she looks."

In the light of the gas-standard near which the cab had halted, Felix Dering glanced at the baby-farmer. The unkempt figure was huddled into a corner of the opposite seat, apparently asleep. But he recognised the wisdom of the little servant's caution, and moved to allow her the suggested room.

With a hasty injunction to the driver to "Go easy for 'arf a mo'," Louisa drew the door after her, pulled up the window, and subsided, at a respectable distance from Felix Dering. She had tied a black shawl over her head, and panted, from haste and excitement. Calming herself, she leaned towards him.

"Won't I get in a fine row if Mrs. S. finds I've been out!" she gasped, sardonically; "oh, no, not much. I shall say I've been talking to the bobby on the beat. But about the child you came after—I heard that part of what Mr. Garland said, thanks to squeezing myself half through the key-hole and stopping my breath till I was purple in the face."

"Yes," murmured Felix, soothingly; "you had something to say to me."

"I had," admitted the little servant. "an' it's this—they went and dyed his blessed hair. Which it was all golden, to begin with, but when Mrs. S. took him off in the hansom, it were a sort of carrots."

The listener started. Neal had not mentioned the fact—was he playing false, or was it a lapse of memory? Louisa broke in upon his meditation.

"Do you know a big man, with yellow eyes and specs?" she queried, still in an undertone; "furriner, I'll bet a million. Sizes you up in a kind of smile as makes you feel as though he was a hundred and you just born. Wears a slop coat and has flat feet."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Felix; "yes, I do—his name is Kraft, he's a German."

"Right you are," said Louisa, "well, he first come about the house a couple of years ago, when Captain Schwartz was alive. The Captain was a Dutchman or a German, or one of them sausage-gorgers; went to sea, he did, most of his time. It was just afore his last voyage as ever was that he brought home Dr. Kraft and two whopping boxes, all coopered, like casks, and stuck full of holes, except where it was printed on 'With great care.' I was a bit of a girl then, at three shillings a week, and the doctor used to potter round the kitchen, cooking messes for some wild beasts as he kept in his boxes. Fine and curious was Mrs. S. about them, but not a sight of them had she to my knowledge, for all she prowled about 'em like Mrs. Bluebeard."

"My dear child," interrupted Felix; "what has this to do with the object of my search?"

"Nowt," conceded Louisa, honestly; "but that was when I first seen the doctor. Then he disappeared. Captain Schwartz was drowned at sea soon after, and not till the boy was fetched by Mr. Garland did the doctor turn up again. The very next day he lands in while the boy was knocking about. Some time after he came once more; I wondered if he could be in it anyhow."

A numbing sense of mystery seized on Felix—he groped for a clue to its recesses. Neal must have been gulling him, both Garland and Mrs. Schwartz must stand in a secret relation to Kraft, a relation hostile to the Derings. But for what reasons?—what could be the German's object in aiding or in commencing the intrigue which Felix was so powerless to plumb?

He stirred, to put a hand in his pocket and extract a sovereign.

"You have given me priceless information," he responded; "and I will not forget you, Louisa. However, for the present, accept this trifling acknowledgement." And he pressed the coin into the servant's palm—Louisa repulsed it.

(To be continued.)

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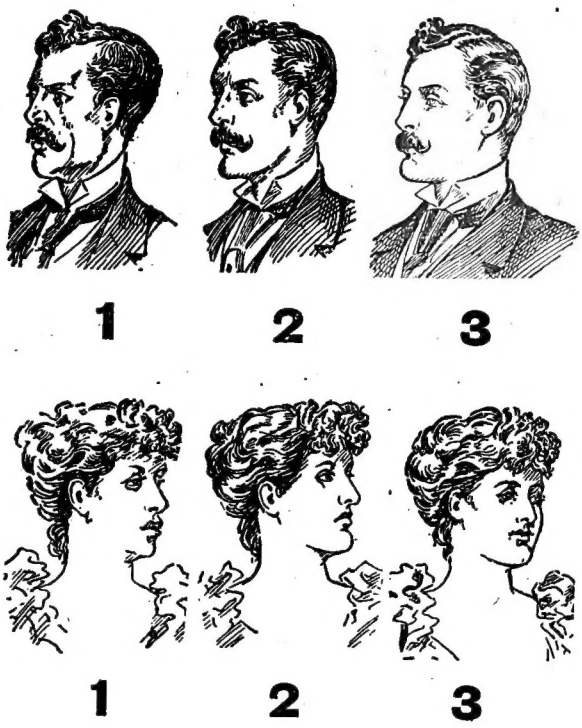

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* * * * *

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

If you are a millionaire the announcement made on page 400 will for you have but a passing interest. But if you are one of that quite considerable number of people who "could do with a five-pound note," the announcement will be worthy of your most careful attention. And one of the chief charms of the affair is that it will give you very little trouble. You merely look at the portraits which we reproduce, and if you find yours among them, drop us a card. If your claim is correct, we send you the five pounds at the earliest possible mom nt. Simplicity itself, you see. Don't give up hope if your portrait isn't among the first lot. We shall give five different portraits each week, and any time yours may appear. Moreover, even if your own portrait isn't there, a friend's may be, in which case tell him of it and win for yourself one of the additional prizes offered.

❦❦❦

This competition is going to be a very big thing indeed. It will become, in the course of the next few weeks, the talk of everybody. For never before will there have been such a wholesale distribution of five-pound notes. I should like to remind you that this affords an admirable opportunity for mentioning *Short Stories* to your friends. The simple query addressed to an acquaintance: "Seen *Short Stories*' photo scheme?" and the thing is done.

❦❦❦

Sebastian—the office boy—sends me the following, which he says he is open to sing at any London variety theatre if managers will pay him fifty guineas a night:

"Have you won that £5 note?
See if your own photo
Has appeared or no.
I ask all Rads and Tories
To buy *Short Stories*,
And win a £5 note to give to me."

❦❦❦

Advice on Love and other Matters.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

"A Proud Papa" writes a doleful letter. His wife has lately presented him with twins, and he complains that ever since their arrival she has had eyes and ears for no one else. What can he do in the matter? He has spoken to her on the subject, but she seemed very upset and annoyed about it. She is only nineteen, and used to be very fond of him. Have patience, "Proud Papa." Every young mother thinks her baby the most lovely and perfect being in the world, and when she has *two*, of course she would feel more proud than ever. Very soon she will get used to them, and you will have no further cause for jealousy. Don't upbraid her, or she will begin to feel that you do not care for your babies. Nineteen is very young to have such a responsibility, and you must help her all you can.

"Sybil" wonders if I shall take the trouble to answer her letter. She is in great grief at the loss of her lover, and feels now tnat he is dead, life is not worth living, and she is sure she can never feel resigned as her friends tell her she ought. She is only eighteen, and looks forward to a long life of wretched unhappiness.

"Dead to the World"

Grand New Serial by
HENRY T. JOHNSON
Starts Soon.

My poor child, I am only too ready to do what I can to help you to bear your terrible burden of lonely sorrow. In such a grief as yours I know how worthless and shallow all words of hope and comfort must appear, but, in days to come, when the first sharp edge of grief has begun to wear off, remember that the parting is but for a little while, and in God's good time you will see your loved one again. You are young, and can do much towards cheering and comforting your poorer brothers and sisters, and, believe me, in helping them you will do the best possible thing towards filling up the blank in your own life.

I am afraid the sovereign you put into the church plate, in mistake for a shilling, cannot be recovered. "Poor Widow." You say you are poor, and can ill spare it; perhaps if you went to the clergyman of the parish and told him your trouble he would do something to help you. I am very sorry for you. It is always a mistake to carry money loose in one's pocket.

You tell me, "Anxious One," that you have a lover who is a Jew, and that your friends try to set you against him, and your mother has forbidden you to have anything to do with him, and yet there is nothing to be said against him beyond the fact that he is a Jew. I should tell your mother that you intend to remain true to him, as you love him; for, after all, you have every right to think about your future, haven't you? Being a Jew is nothing to his discredit, and I should take no notice of what people say on the subject. No, I do not think eighteen is too young for a girl to be engaged. Many thanks for your good wishes.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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Called by him "TATCHO."

(Romany: "Genuine," "Good," "True.")

And why, pray, is the successful poet, playwright, and journalist an eminent authority on hair restorer? Eager for an explanation, a *Daily Mail* representative sought out Mr. Sims. . . .

Now Mr. G. R. Sims, as many people know, is one of the busiest men in the kingdom, but hastily affixing his signature to a letter, he looked up and extended a characteristically cordial welcome. Then he said: "I will explain. I found that I was rapidly going bald. Not seriously, you understand, but the thinning out was sufficiently marked to set me thinking out a remedy. I went to two specialists, both of whom cheerfully assured me that I should be absolutely bald in two years.

"Then I discovered the preparation which is now placed upon the market. **I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders. Look at my hair now, isn't that convincing evidence of the value of my preparation.**

"Ladies confirm my good opinion of it as a dressing for daily use. Mrs. Brown Potter, whose beautiful hair is the admiration of the entire lady world, writes that she uses nothing but 'Tatcho.' There is nothing to prevent every woman from making her hair silken in texture and bountiful in volume, for she can obtain a bottle of 'Tatcho' now in every town or even village."

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Large 4/6 Bottle Post 1/10 Free.

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A LEES RAY (S.S. Dept.), **South Castle St., Liverpool,** is a Specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his Patent Scientific Nose Improver. Medically-approved Red Nose Cure, 3/9. Pamphlet, "Cause and Prevention," 1/-. Machines for Prominent Ears. Blackhead Cure **1/9.**

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With a guarantee to keep correct time for three years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 2/9, and three stamps extra for postage. To every purchaser during this month we give with it ABSOLUTELY FREE a strong Mexican SILVER CHAIN. All we ask of you is to show them to your friends, as by doing so you advertise our business.

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". . . I had the severest attack I have had in my life while I was fetching your 'Alkan,' and with **marvellous effect** and **magnetic influence** it arrested the pain **instantly.**

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